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The usefulness of social media in crisis communication: How Vietnamese companies and stakeholders view social media engagement during crises.

Ly-Le, Tuong-Minh

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**The Usefulness of Social Media in Crisis Communication:
How Vietnamese Companies and Stakeholders
View Social Media Engagement during Crises**

Tuong-Minh Ly-Le

Submitted in total fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Bond University – Faculty of Society and Design

Assistant Professor Marilyn Mitchell and Assistant Professor Sven Brodmerkel

Abstract

This research examined the usefulness of social media for crisis communication in Vietnam from the perspectives of public relations practitioners and stakeholders to develop an understanding of how and whether social media channels could be used to better respond to stakeholder needs and uphold organizational reputation. Only internal crises that began or were amplified on social media were considered.

The research consisted of interviews with 24 practitioners and 13 stakeholders, and survey responses from 50 practitioners and 370 stakeholders. Practitioner questions were developed using three aspects of Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory: (1) the *advantages* of using social media compared to traditional media, (2) the *compatibility* of using social media with current norms and values of Vietnamese public relations practitioners and organizations, and (3) the *paths by which organizations adopt* social media for communicating crises. Compatibility was operationalized by using Hofstede's cultural dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance. Stakeholder questions were developed using Schultz, Utz, and Göritz's networked crisis communication theory (NCCT), which holds that the channel through which a crisis is communicated affects stakeholder reactions.

The research found that although social media may be advantageous in pre-crisis and post-crisis stages, most organizations do not engage in monitoring the social media space as Vietnamese public relations is concerned more with marketing than stakeholder relations, and practitioners find social media channels complex to manage.

For crisis response, the speed, reach, interactivity, and transparency of social media channels were found to be both advantageous and limiting. An organization would be likely to use social media in addition to traditional media if the organization aimed to quickly reach as many stakeholders as possible, be truthful, receive a positive reaction from stakeholders, prevent rumors, signal willingness to communicate, and make information available to the press. As the results of this study show, social media should be used in addition to traditional media firstly because stakeholders find traditional media more credible, and secondly because any subsequent dialogue would preferably occur offline. If an organization had a strong need to control information, it would likely not select social media.

Most stakeholders expressed a preference for well-considered responses in traditional media to quick responses on social media, although many stakeholders want a response in social media, too. As the message matters more than the channel, Vietnamese practitioners should consider the message more thoroughly.

Key words: social media, crisis communication, crisis response, Vietnam, diffusion of innovations, networked crisis communication theory

Declaration by Author

This thesis is submitted to Bond University in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

This thesis represents my own original work towards this research degree and contains no material that has previously been submitted for a degree or diploma at this University or any other institution, except where due acknowledgement is made.

Tuong-Minh Ly-Le

Research Output

Peer-reviewed Publications

- Ly-Le, T. M. (2018). Gaps in perceptions on social media use in crisis communication between Vietnamese organizations and stakeholders. *DeReMa (Development Research of Management): Jurnal Manajemen*, 13(1), 11-19.
- Ly-Le, T. M. (2018). What facilitates and hinders the use of social media in crisis communication in Vietnamese organizations. *Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Entrepreneurship and Business Management (ICEBM 2017)*, 70-75.
- Ly-Le, T.M. (2019). A review of current crisis communication efforts and the role of social media in crisis communication in Vietnam: From the stakeholders' viewpoint. *Asian Journal of Applied Communication*, 8(1).

Presented Conference Abstracts

- Ly-Le, T. M. (2017). *The use of social media in crisis communication – A Vietnam-U.S. comparison*. Presented at Australian and New Zealand Communication Association (ANZCA) 2017 Conference. Sydney, Australia.
- Ly-Le, T. M. (2017). *Gaps in perceptions on social media use in crisis communication between Vietnamese organizations and stakeholders*. Presented at International Conference of Entrepreneurship and Business Management (ICEBM) 2017. Hanoi, Vietnam.
- Ly-Le, T. M. (2017). *What facilitates and hinders the use of social media in crisis communication in Vietnamese organizations*". Presented at International Conference of Entrepreneurship and Business Management (ICEBM) 2017. Hanoi, Vietnam.
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Ethics Declaration

The research associated with this thesis received ethics approval from the Bond University Human Research Ethics Committee. Ethics application number 0000015357.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the past five years, Vietnam, like other countries, has witnessed many social media crises, which are organizational and brand crises that began or were amplified on social media. In each instance, through extensive online sharing of a single stakeholder post about an organizational issue, social media users attracted enough attention to these issues to turn them into full crises. However, despite stakeholders using social media to communicate about crises, Vietnamese organizations have generally not done so, preferring instead to respond via traditional media. Since many stakeholders use social media to communicate during crises, it is arguable that organizations should join them on these channels to respond.

In Vietnam, social media are popular communication channels in which people can discuss nearly anything including issues with organizations that may turn into crises. It is noteworthy that the social media penetration rate in the country is 48 percent with more than 46 million active social media users (Kemp, 2017). Two examples of crises involved the Danlait company and Red Bear Noodles. In 2013, Danlait's crisis began when a mother's comment on a forum about her baby's reaction to Danlait's formula milk led to the fining and closure of the Danlait company. The Red Bear Noodles' crisis occurred in 2012 when a journalist's note on his personal Facebook page about Red Bear's misleading TV commercials gathered enough attention to turn into a massive boycott of the product.

Despite the powerful effect of social media in conditioning a crisis, and the trend to integrate social media into crisis management strategies in many countries, research indicates that Vietnamese companies have often ignored or underutilized these channels. Through a preliminary analysis of the stories on crisis response of Vietnamese companies to the media from 2010-2015, the author noticed that all analyzed companies placed their crisis responses in traditional media (i.e., press releases or press conferences) and paid little to no attention to social media, even if a crisis had started on social media.

Not only have social media in Vietnamese crisis communication received little attention, but so has research in public relations (PR) in the country in general. Public relations in Vietnam is diverse and influenced by the Western practice and the local culture (Van, 2013; Domm, 2015; Sison & Sarabia-Panol, 2018). However, public relations in Vietnam usually focuses on marketing purposes (Van, 2013), media relations and short-term public relations campaigns (Hang, 2010; Doan & Bilowol, 2014), even though Vietnamese public relations industry now sees an opportunity to evolve with growing demand for reputation management support. It is only when a crisis occurs that public relations practitioners pay more attention to reputation management (Van, 2013; 2014). Given the above, this study seeks to understand more about crisis communication in Vietnam and

how Vietnamese companies and stakeholders perceive the usefulness of social media in crisis communication.

A previous study on Vietnamese public relations by Van (2014) provides background information for understanding the importance of this current study. Van evaluated the practice of public relations in Vietnam according to Grunig and Hunt's (1984) theory of public relations to establish whether and how the theory, which was developed in the West, was applicable in Vietnam. Van (2014) posited that the theory might not hold in Vietnam because the culture conducts private and business relationships quite differently from the West. In Vietnam, relationships carry much greater influence (Tran, 1999; 2004).

According to Grunig and Hunt (1984), public relations may be practiced in four different ways, which are: (1) press agency or publicity, (2) public information, (3) two-way asymmetrical, and (4) two-way symmetrical. Under the first model, practitioners aim to persuade or manipulate their stakeholders according to the desires of the organization. Practitioners aim to emphasize an organization's positive features and minimize any that are negative even to the point of misguiding stakeholders. Under the second model, practitioners also disseminate positive information, but the information tends to be truthful and factual. Under this model, organizations are neither aiming to manipulate nor to be untruthful. Under the third model, which is two-way asymmetrical, practitioners conduct research on stakeholder attitudes to determine how best to communicate with them. The practitioners do not try to change how their organization is acting. Finally, under the fourth model, which is two-way symmetrical, practitioners research and communicate with stakeholders to better understand them, solve their problems and build trust. When an organization follows this model, it learns from its stakeholders and changes its behavior instead of trying to manipulate and control (Grunig, 2006). However, critics of this fourth model say that it represents the ideal for public relations but that public relations cannot always be practiced this way because stakeholders often present too many viewpoints (Wakefield, 2008). To move toward the ideal of two-way symmetrical, or a the more realistic mixed-motive model which joins two-way asymmetrical with two-way symmetrical, Grunig and Hunt (1984) said that an organization moves from the first model of "complete truth not essential" to the second model of "truth important," to the third model of "scientific persuasion" (p. 22). Under the mixed-motive model, practitioners try to help their organizations achieve their goals while also looking after stakeholders.

When research was conducted in Asia, yet another model of public relations was found which became labelled the *personal influence model* (e.g. Chen, 1996). According to this model "the success of public relations is greatly influenced by personal networks ... with important individuals and leaders, especially the media and governmental people" (Van, 2014, p. 57).

Through interviews with 29 PR practitioners working in-house and in agencies, Van (2014) found that Vietnamese public relations practitioners follow Grunig and Hunt's (1984) first and second models which involve one-way communication, but do not follow the other two models which involve research on and communication with stakeholders. Public relations in Vietnam therefore tends to be one way and organizations do not communicate interactively with stakeholders. Van (2014) also found that Vietnamese public relations involves the setting up of personal relations between practitioners and members of the media, which is the personal influence model. Given the established Vietnamese practice of Grunig and Hunt's (1984) first two models combined with the personal influence model, this research seeks to understand whether and how the new two-way channels of social media may be affecting one important task of public relations, which is crisis communication. Currently, Vietnamese stakeholders are openly discussing organizational crises on social media, making knowledge of these crises more widely available and attempting to take control away from organizations. This research seeks to understand how organizations are responding to crisis communication on these new channels and how organisations might use social media to better serve stakeholders. It is thought that social media could be pushing organizations towards the third and mixed-motive models of public relations for crisis communication.

The findings of this study aim to provide insights into both organizational and stakeholder perspectives of the use of social media in crisis communication in Vietnam to discover whether and how the organization could use these channels for this purpose. These findings are expected to be of interest to communication scholars and public relations or communication professionals in the country and internationally who want to better understand the practice of crisis communication in Vietnam as well as to potentially improve it. As mentioned earlier, little is known about public relations practice in this country so this study will shed more light on it. Also, practitioners internationally are still learning how to handle the relatively new channels of social media for crisis communication so this study aims to provide guidelines for organizational use of social media for this purpose. Understanding the many influences of social media adoption within an organization and the underlying beliefs of stakeholders can yield new and different ways to improve crisis communication practice. Also, studying the use of social media for crisis communication within a Communist country is particularly interesting as these channels give stakeholders a voice and may be pushing organizations to listen and respond to them, which would be following Grunig and Hunt's (1984) models 3 and 4 or some variation thereof. Further, even though the study focuses on Vietnam, it is possible that the results may be applicable more broadly and useful in analyzing the same topics in other countries.

Moreover, while the emphasis of this research is social media, the results may apply to the broader adoption of communication channels in crisis communication within organizations. Besides good content and manner, this study explores how a wise use of a communication channel contributes to the efficiency of crisis communication. As technology is changing rapidly, it is necessary for organizations to grasp how to evaluate new technologies and new channels to keep pace with immediate trends and stakeholder needs.

Knowledge of how best to use social media for this purpose, however, is still developing, and many researchers have called for further research on the role of social media as crisis communication channels (e.g., Coombs & Holladay, 2008; Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011; Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013). Coombs (2014) has stated that “basic ideas from traditional media relations do not and should not be applied” to social media and that public relations (PR) practitioners need to be clever and knowledgeable to strategically use social media during crises (p. 22). To date, in Vietnam context, little research has explored this topic on the usefulness of social media in public relations (PR) or crisis communication in this developing Communist country. While this dissertation is not an ethnography, I will use my own observations and experience as a Vietnamese public relations practitioner to a very limited extent as Vietnam does not have many resources about crisis communication and social media. This research considers only those crises that start on social media and for which an organization is perceived to be responsible. The research consists of interviews and surveys with Vietnamese public relations practitioners and stakeholders. The two questions that guide the research are:

RQ1. How do organizations and public relations practitioners in Vietnam perceive the use of social media channels to communicate with stakeholders during crises?

RQ2. What do Vietnamese stakeholders expect of an organizational crisis response that appears on social media channels?

The dissertation took a functionalist approach to crisis communication within a Vietnamese context. According to Shockley-Zalabak (2002), a functionalist approach “helps us understand ... what messages do and how they move through organizations and among people in society” (p. 39). This approach “looks at how things work, why and what can be done to improve them” (Weerakkody, 2015, p. 30). This study therefore examines how media are used by organizations and stakeholders for communicating internal organizational crises and whether and how such communication could be improved if organizations communicated about their crises on social media. The aim of the research is to determine the perceived strengths and limitations of social media for crisis communication in Vietnam, how organizations have adopted it, and how stakeholders would like organizations to use it to communicate during crises. Theories selected to

study organizational adoption of social media for crisis communication are Rogers' diffusion of innovations (DOI) and Hofstede's dimensions of culture, particularly the dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance. These dimensions were selected to consider culture's role in adoption. To study whether and how stakeholders would like organizations to use social media during crisis communication, this research uses networked crisis communication theory (NCCT). This theory was developed to study the influence of communication medium on stakeholders' perceptions and acceptance of an organization's crisis communication effort.

1.1. Crisis Communication and Social Media

No organization is immune to crises and therefore needs to proactively develop crisis management plans, which may include social media (Benoit, 1995; Coombs, 2014). Crisis and crisis management have become common terms in most organizations. To define them in the context of PR, a crisis is a situation that carries the perception of unpredictable incidents that may threaten an organization's values, interfere with its operation and damage its public image (Coombs, 2014). Potential crises know no boundaries; they can happen at any place and at any time. Where there are social groups, there is potential for crises. As a result, crisis management is important throughout the world in all situations where people may react to various breaches of their trust, safety, or the law. What determines the effectiveness of a particular instance of crisis management is not the seriousness of the crisis at hand, but how the organization addresses it (Goodman, 2017). Much of the literature reviewed for this research makes similar points that an organization should communicate early and frequently with stakeholders about the crisis, identify the problem and take steps to handle it, express compassion and concern, and reduce uncertainty among stakeholders (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2015). Effective crisis communication should focus on finding solutions to a crisis and providing stakeholders with accurate, timely, consistent, and relevant information (Ulmer et al., 2015; Fraustino & Liu, 2017; Coombs, 2014). The many crises that have occurred in different countries are clear evidence of the importance of an effective crisis management strategy that incorporates the needs of stakeholders and maintains an organization's reputation.

In crisis management, crisis communication plays a vital role as it may helpfully control a crisis or harm key values that should have been protected. Among the challenges in effective crisis communication, understanding and dealing with various media channels is an essential task. Different channels have different advantages and disadvantages regarding credibility, reach, speed, and interactivity, and may be used in combination to manage a crisis. In fact, Coombs and Holladay (2008) and Utz et al. (2013) recommend that organizations deliver crisis messages across a range of media so as to reach more people. As people routinely check and express themselves on Facebook,

YouTube, blogs or forums, social media have become extremely fertile environments for crises to bloom and spread. A crisis can start with a simple negative review, a complaint or a hint of whistle-blowing. Social media enable people to be more connected, and the viral nature of these channels means that a crisis that begins on them can escalate rapidly. According to Coombs (2014), it may only take a moment for the first warning sign of a crisis to gain significant exposure, become online trending news and turn into an online firestorm.

On the stakeholders' side, social media provide them with opportunities to voice their concerns, compliments, thoughts or questions about organizations and their products or services (Ruehl & Ingenhoff, 2015). These channels give stakeholders some control over what is said about organizations and how organizations are perceived (Coombs, 2014). Social media have empowered stakeholders to be able to start a crisis or share and seek information about a crisis. In addition, journalists nowadays are members of social networks. They may use social media to actively seek good and trending stories to pique their readers' interest (Sutton, Palen, & Shklovski, 2007) and find interesting story angles. In brief, social media channels give stakeholders opportunities to send messages that may escalate to full crises if the messages are neglected or mismanaged by the involved organizations.

1.2. A Study of the Usefulness of Social Media in Crisis Communication in Vietnam

1.2.1. Terminology.

This section defines terms used throughout the dissertation. Firstly, *organization* refers to any business that is perceived to be responsible for a crisis occurring. As an organization makes moves to influence how a crisis develops, interested stakeholders follow carefully and may make their own moves in response.

Stakeholders are individuals who are affected by a crisis or are actively seeking information about a crisis, and at the same time, can affect an organization's operations. They are information-receiving parties who, if using social media, may also be information-generating parties. In this study, stakeholders are external to organizations. They can be customers, victims or their associates, as well as general audiences who care about a crisis and its outcome.

An organizational crisis is the perception of an abrupt incident that impacts the interest and expectations of stakeholders in an organization and requires immediate attention and reaction from that organization (Coombs, 2014). A crisis, if neglected or handled poorly, can seriously harm an organization's reputation, legitimacy and performance. According to Coombs (2014), organizational crises may be separated into the two categories of *traditional crises* and *social media crises*. In this dissertation, the term *crisis* is used to describe a social media crisis, which is a crisis that begins or grows through stakeholder communication on social media. This type of crisis

generally harms an organization's reputation, and usually stems from stakeholders' questioning an organization's ethics and social responsibility (Conway, Ward, Lewis & Bernhardt, 2007). Coombs (2014) further categorized social media crisis to an *organizational misuse social media crisis* (when an organization breaks existing, acceptable communication on social media), a *dissatisfied customer social media crisis* (when a customer's complaint on social media is amplified), or a *challenge* (when an organization is perceived as irresponsible or inappropriate by its stakeholders). This dissertation considers all types of social media crises but especially social media challenges when the responsibility is perceived to belong to an organization.

In this research, the term *social media* is not to be used interchangeably with web 2.0 or user-generated content. This dissertation follows the definition of *social media* provided by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) who said that it is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 61). Social media may take many forms, including social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn; online forums; blogs; microblogs; wikis; and photo- and video-sharing sites. However, as discussed below, Vietnamese people use fewer types of social media than people in other countries (Lan Huong, 2014).

In Vietnam, the most popular SNS is Facebook, while other SNSs account for only about half of Facebook's share (Kemp, 2017). Facebook is ranked in the top three sites in Vietnam ("Alexa," n.d.). It is ranked even above most traditional news websites, including Tuoi Tre, Thanh Nien, Dan Tri and VnExpress, which are the nation's most popular and influential news websites. Moreover, compared to all other applications, Vietnamese people prefer online forums and blogs for sharing information. During previous crises in the country, Facebook, forums and blogs were repeatedly used as the main channels for individuals to voice their concerns (Lan Huong, 2014). Therefore, in this research, the term *social media* refers specifically to Facebook, forums and blogs.

Next, an *innovation*, as defined by Rogers (1962), "is an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption" (p. 11). In this dissertation, the innovation is the practice by Vietnamese organizations of communicating their crises through social media channels either instead of or in addition to their practice of using traditional media for this purpose. This practice can be considered new because few Vietnamese organizations have used social media for communicating crises.

A last term to include in this list is *traditional media*. Such media refers to print and television broadcast news that can also appear online in a news website or from a news source in a user's social media feed. Unlike social media, traditional media takes the approach of one-way communication from organizations to the public.

1.2.2. The conceptual models.

This research studies crises in Vietnam from two perspectives, which are those of organizations and their stakeholders. The first research question, which studies crisis communication from the organizational perspective, is “How do organizations and public relations practitioners in Vietnam perceive the use of social media channels to communicate with stakeholders during crises?” To answer this question, this research applies Rogers’ (1962; 2003) diffusion of innovations (DOI) theory to explore how social media are adopted and diffused for crisis communication in organizations, and Hofstede’s (2001) cultural dimensions to consider cultural influences on adoption. DOI is chosen to guide the study, examine different influential factors on the adoption of new crisis communication practices, and explain the social media adoption process. As culture is one of the most significant influences on public relations practice, of which crisis communication is a part, this research chose Hofstede’s research to dig deeper into Vietnamese cultural preferences. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance are used to explain the cultural rationales behind social media adoption or avoidance.

The second research question, which studies crisis communication from the stakeholder perspective, is “What do Vietnamese stakeholders expect of an organizational crisis response that appears on social media channels?” The question concerns stakeholders’ reception of social media use in the crisis communication of an organization. This issue is analyzed with networked crisis communication theory (NCCT) to explain social media influence on the stakeholders. NCCT was chosen as it describes how the media through which an organization sends a crisis message affects stakeholder reception of the message (Utz, et al., 2013).

1.2.2.1. Diffusion of innovations and the impact of culture.

Diffusion of innovations, also called diffusion theory or DOI, proposed by Rogers (1962), examines how new ideas, practices and objects can be adopted and accepted by an individual or an organization. DOI has been used in the context of internet, social media and crisis communication research (e.g., Taylor & Perry, 2005; Lin, Spence, Sellnow & Lachlan, 2016). In this study, DOI is used to describe the adoption of social media by public relations practitioners for crisis communication in Vietnam. Rogers (2003) asserted that such adoption happens through a five-step process:

- Knowledge: people learn about the innovation
- Persuasion: people develop an interest in the innovation
- Decision: people weigh the pros and cons of the innovation
- Implementation: the innovation is temporarily implemented to evaluate its effectiveness

- Adoption or failure to adopt: people accept or reject the innovation.

In this dissertation, the innovation is the practice by Vietnamese organizations of communicating their crises through social media channels. The innovation can be rejected at any step; however, the decision step, where an individual or organization has to acquire enough empirical evidence to decide, is the more focused step, where an organization considers whether the innovation fits with its values.

To help understand the adoption of social media for crisis communication in Vietnam, this dissertation will also apply Hofstede's (2001) dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance. Although Hofstede described three other dimensions of culture, which are individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, and long-term versus short-term orientation to time, the two dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance were selected for this study as they deal with power relations, which influence technology adoption (Straub, Keil, & Brenner, 1997). As one example of researchers who used these dimensions to study technology adoption, Matusitz and Musambira (2013) compared the levels of power distance and uncertainty avoidance in different countries to their Internet usage and amount of telecommunication infrastructure. Specifically, the researchers examined levels of Internet use, number of cell or mobile phone subscriptions, and number of telephone mainlines. They found that countries with a high level of power distance had low use of the Internet, low mobile phone subscriptions, and a low number of phone lines, while countries with a low level of power distance had high use of the Internet, and a high number of mobile phone subscriptions and telephone lines. One exception was South Korea, which has a high power distance but also high Internet use and a high number of mobile phone subscriptions and phone lines. The researchers thought that the difference for South Korea could be due to the affordability of technology in the country. Also, countries with high uncertainty avoidance had low Internet use and lower numbers of mobile phone subscriptions, and countries with low uncertainty avoidance had high Internet use and higher numbers of mobile phone subscriptions. The level of uncertainty avoidance had no correlation to the number of telephone mainlines.

Regarding power distance, Hofstede (2001) defined it as "The extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (p. 98). In "What about Vietnam" (n.d.), a Hofstede Centre report, Vietnam scores high on the power distance index (70 out of 100 points), which means that the less powerful members of Vietnamese institutions generally accept a hierarchical order, expect inherent inequalities and understand that they should act deferentially towards their supervisors. (Note that in the past, the high end of Hofstede scales could be reported just beyond 100 (e.g. Hofstede, 1984).

However, the scales reported here are from the more current Hofstede Centre report, which uses the scale of 0-100 for all dimensions. The dimensions were rescaled in Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov's 2010 book.) As this power distance index runs from 0 to 100, a country that scores under 50 is considered to be a low power-distance country and above 50 is a high power-distance country. In comparison, the U.S. scores relatively low on the power distance index at 40 points ("United States," n.d.). From this score, it is expected that within American organizations, the power is less centralized, and managers are more accessible and rely on employees and teams for opinions and expertise. In Vietnam, it is expected that in an organizational setting, the managers will typically make the final decisions regarding the adoption of certain technologies. It is also expected that if the managers decide to adopt social media in any particular crisis communication, the public relations team and the rest of the employees should generally accept this new channel without openly questioning the decision.

The other Hofstede dimension applied in this dissertation is uncertainty avoidance. This dimension describes the degree to which members of a society tolerate or feel threatened by ambiguity, and to which existing rules and orders are favored (Hofstede, 2001). Vietnam scores relatively low on the uncertainty avoidance index (30 out of 100 points), which means that Vietnamese people generally maintain a relaxed attitude about uncertainty, do not see innovations as threatening and are more tolerant of trying new things ("What about Vietnam," n.d.). In comparison, the U.S. has a slightly higher uncertainty avoidance index than Vietnam at 46 points ("United States," n.d.). Nonetheless, this score is also low, which may indicate similar attitudes toward innovation as people in Vietnam. Altogether, the uncertainty avoidance score for Vietnam suggests that if organizational opinion leaders perceive the benefits of an innovation to be strong enough, they are likely to adopt the innovation. Again, these cultural expectations about the adoption of social media for crisis communication will be explored in this research.

To summarize, by applying DOI to this research, the author aims to understand different influences on crisis information sharing and seeking on social media channels in Vietnam from an organizational viewpoint. These influences include the perceived benefits of social media use for crisis communication in organizations and the roles of different organizational groups and opinion leaders in adoption. From DOI and Hofstede's study, the following five dimensions will be used to analyze such influences:

- Relative advantage: the degree of perceived advantage of adopting social media for crisis communication in addition to or instead of the existing methods (Rogers, 2003). In this study, relative advantage refers to the perceived benefits of using social media in crisis

communication in Vietnam compared to the practice of using traditional media in crisis communication.

- **Compatibility:** the degree of perceived consistency of innovation with the existing sociocultural values, previously introduced ideas and adopter's needs (Rogers, 2003). In this study, compatibility represents whether the use of social media in crisis communication is consistent with the values and norms of Vietnamese organizations.
- **Opinion leaders:** the group of people that can influence others' attitudes and behaviors (Rogers, 2003). Opinion leadership can be obtained and retained through an individual's competence, social status and compliance with social norms. In this study, opinion leaders are those who can strongly influence or force the adoption or rejection of social media in crisis communication.
- **Power distance:** the degree to which the members of a society expect and readily accept that power is unequally distributed and centered at the top of management (Hofstede, 2001). In this study, power distance refers to how strongly an organization's management can influence social media adoption in crisis communication.
- **Uncertainty avoidance:** the degree to which members of a society try to avoid ambiguity by maintaining existing norms and practices (Hofstede, 2001). In this study, uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which organizations see the adoption of social media for crisis communication as threatening or intolerable.

1.2.2.2. Networked crisis communication theory.

As stated earlier, this study applies networked crisis communication theory (NCCT) by Schultz et al. (2011) to understand crisis communication on social media from stakeholder viewpoints. To develop NCCT, Schultz and colleagues (2011) conducted a study on the perceptions and reactions to crisis communication via social media. The participants were recruited via an online panel and were from a wide range of ages, education levels and employment. Most of them were daily internet users. The participants were shown different crisis communication scenarios and presented one of the three reactions (apology, sympathy, information) via one of the three media (newspaper, blog, Twitter). The results showed that in crisis communication, different media, which are the channels through which an organization chooses to communicate with its stakeholders, have different effects on how stakeholders respond to the same crisis information message (Schultz et al., 2011).

Studies (e.g., Liu & Fraustino, 2014; Schultz et al., 2011; Schultz, Utz, & Glocka, 2012; Utz et al., 2013) have found that with the same crisis type and communication message, how

stakeholders react to a crisis message on social media differs from how they react to such a message on traditional media. NCCT studies were conducted in different Western countries, including Germany, the Netherlands and the U.S., and all results confirmed that the use of social media influences crisis communication due to users' experience and interpretation.

NCCT asserts that in crisis communication, the medium, which is the channel through which an organization chooses to communicate crisis information, has a strong effect on the public's response. According to the theory, the choice of medium influences the reputation of the organization, the potential occurrence of a secondary crisis and the reaction of stakeholders (Schultz et al., 2011). More specifically, an organization communicating about its crisis on social media channels may appear more sincere and caring towards the stakeholders, as such communication shows that the organization wants to inform the stakeholders more quickly and directly, and that it is willing to engage in dialogue with the stakeholders (Schultz et al., 2012). By communicating directly, Schultz et al. (2012) meant that organizations skip the step of journalistic gatekeeping to deliver personalized messages. Therefore, crisis communication on social media can lead to a higher reputation for the organization than crisis communication via traditional media (e.g., newspapers) (Utz et al., 2013). Furthermore, the researchers claim that a secondary crisis (e.g., judging the crisis communication effort, talking badly about the organization, boycotting the organization) is less likely to develop once the crisis news sharing is implemented on social media, compared to news on traditional media because by communicating on social media, an organization shows that it cares about the stakeholders and wants to share the critical information more quickly (Schultz et al., 2012).

This study seeks to understand whether Vietnamese stakeholders would like organizations to include social media in their crisis response efforts, and if an organization's use of social media has an influence on stakeholders' reactions to such a response. From NCCT, the following three dimensions will be used to analyze the stakeholders' preferences:

- Reputation: the stakeholders' perceptual interpretation of a company's action; in crisis communication, reputation is developed through an organization's degree of crisis responsibility and its information sharing with the media (Schultz et al., 2011).
- Secondary crisis communication: the stakeholders' intention to pass the crisis news along, tell their friends and input comments (Schultz et al., 2011).
- Secondary crisis reactions: the stakeholders' judgment of an organization's response and their readiness to boycott if the response is perceived negatively (Schultz et al., 2011).

1.2.3. Overview of methods.

This research used the functionalist approach to explore the role of social media in crisis communication in Vietnam. This approach aims to understand how public relations practitioners can handle crisis communication better.

There were two phases of this study. In phase 1, interviews were conducted with two main groups of participants in Vietnam, who were public relations practitioners (group 1) and organizational stakeholders including general audiences (group 2). In phase 2, after the interviews, members of these groups participated in large-scale surveys. The results from the public relations practitioner interviews and surveys were compared with those of the stakeholders. In phase 3, another series of interviews was conducted with a second group of public relations practitioners to consider differences between practitioner and stakeholder perceptions. The study process is labelled as follows:

- Phase 1 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with Vietnamese public relations practitioners – interview (1a).
- Phase 1 in-depth interviews with Vietnamese stakeholders – interview (2a).
- Phase 2 survey with Vietnamese public relations practitioners – survey (1b).
- Phase 2 survey with Vietnamese stakeholders – survey (2b).
- Phase 3 in-depth interviews with Vietnamese public relations practitioners – interview (1c).

Interviews (1a) and (2a) were semi-structured individual interviews. From the results of these interviews, hypotheses were advanced to examine the research questions. These IDIs were conducted in a face-to-face setting or through Skype video conference.

Surveys (1b) and (2b) employed a quantitative approach to quantify the respondents' opinions on the research topics. Using a three-point Likert scale ("always," "occasionally," and "never") and a five-point Likert scale ("strongly disagree," "disagree," "neither disagree nor agree," "agree," and "strongly agree"), the surveys were designed to capture the various degrees of agreement with the provided statements. The surveys were distributed online. The main purpose of these surveys was not to increase the generalizability of the results but to test the findings from the in-depth interviews with statistical results.

Interview (1c) with practitioners used a qualitative approach to gain deeper understanding of the differences between stakeholder and practitioner answers from phase 1. These IDIs were also semi-structured individual interviews, conducted through face-to-face or Skype video meetings.

By using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, this study aimed to make the research more complete, meaningful and accurate. According to the public relations researchers,

Jugenheimer, Kelley, Hudson and Bradley (2014), with a study on the public's opinion of the practice of public relations (such as this current study), using quantitative methods alone can only gather basic, superficial data. Using a mixed method approach with both qualitative and quantitative methods can help the researcher embellish primary expectations, then further explore the variety and depth of opinions, and influences behind them. Therefore, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is a useful approach for public relations studies to overcome the limitations of each method.

1.2.4. The dissertation structure.

This dissertation is organized into ten chapters. This first chapter introduces the study, explaining its relevance and scope. The chapter presents the research objectives and terminology and provides an overview of the conceptual models and research methods.

The second chapter discusses the public relations industry in Vietnam. The chapter then reviews the existing literature related to the topic of social media use in crisis communication, discussing the concepts of *reputation* and *trust*, *stakeholder* and *stakeholder communication*, *crisis*, *crisis communication*, *traditional crisis communication*, and *social media in crisis communication*.

The third chapter reviews the theories selected for evaluating the usefulness of social media in crisis communication in Vietnam. As stated, these are Rogers' DOI, Hofstede's dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance, and NCCT.

As will be discussed, this research includes both qualitative (interview) and quantitative (survey) methods to assess the topic. Chapter 4 provides information on the qualitative and quantitative research methods selected, which are the in-depth interview and the survey. The chapter discusses rationales for selecting this method, sampling the target population, and choosing the sample size and recruitment locations. The chapter also presents the research design including the questions used.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 then report the empirical findings of the interviews and surveys in phase 1 of the research. Chapter 5 presents the collected data from the research and then analyze the data. The findings from the analysis include prominent themes and quotes from the interviews. From the themes, the researcher proposes hypotheses to answer the first research question about public relations practitioners' perceptions of the usefulness of social media in crisis communication. Chapter 6 then reports and discusses the survey findings. Chapter 7 reflects on the results from this research and identifies similarities and differences in perceptions of the usefulness of social media in crisis communication between public relations practitioners and stakeholders in Vietnam.

Chapter 8 reports the empirical findings of the interviews of phase 2, analyzes the collected data and compares the results with the hypotheses.

Chapter 9 gives an overall discussion of the research. This chapter reflects on the two research questions and compares the results between PR practitioners and stakeholders. It then discusses the theoretical and practical implications for crisis communication in Vietnam.

Chapter 10 concludes this dissertation. It covers the major features of the results and their contributions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature on the effective management of organizational crises from public relations perspectives in Vietnam and the West. In general, effective crisis management involves proactively scanning for crises, taking action to prevent crises, preparing for potential crises, recognizing and responding to crises, and evaluating crisis actions and stakeholders' impressions when the crisis is over (Coombs, 2014). Since few studies have been conducted in Vietnam, most of the reviewed literature comes from Western, democratic countries.

The chapter begins by discussing the context in which PR, including crisis communication, is practiced in Vietnam. It then considers why crisis management is so important, which is that organizations need to maintain their reputations and corresponding stakeholder trust. Reviewing Western literature, the chapter then defines a crisis and discusses general advice for managing crises. Next, to provide an example of how social media is currently used for crisis communication in Vietnam, the chapter presents a well-known crisis that involved the soft drink company, Tan Hiep Phat. The chapter then reviews other Western literature that is specific to managing a crisis on social media. This literature considers the particular advantages and limitations of using social media for this purpose and how organizations are actually using social media for crisis communication. Lastly, the chapter reviews literature on how stakeholders use social media during crises.

2.1. The Context of Crisis Communication in Vietnam

Crisis communication in Vietnam is currently conducted within a landscape of government-controlled traditional media in which citizens have recently received the right to use social media. As Vietnamese people have low trust in traditional media (Parker, Nguyen & Brennan, 2012), social media offer opportunities to organizations and individuals to share their opinions more freely and gather information with little restriction or censorship. Vietnam is among the countries with the most time spent on social media (Kemp, 2017), and social media have become important channels for introducing and sharing crisis information.

2.1.1. The traditional media landscape in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, traditional media channels in which public relations and crisis communication are conducted have been around for decades, establishing their influence throughout all walks of life. In 2015, Vietnam's Ministry of Information and Communication assessed that Vietnam has 858 traditional media agencies, offering 199 print newspapers, 659 magazines, 105 online news portals and 207 synthesized news websites (MIC, 2015). However, Vietnam is one of the many countries where the level of public trust and confidence in media is low (Parker et al., 2012). This

low level of trust and confidence in traditional media obviously impacts stakeholders' perceptions of crisis communication.

One reason for the low trust and confidence could be that all media are owned by and under the control of the state. Various ministries and government agencies have their own media channels (including print, online, broadcast and sometimes social media). When delivering messages to journalists and the media, a person is also delivering a message to the government (Vero Public Relations, 2014). In turn, when receiving news from traditional media, a person is receiving mainly messages that support Vietnamese government policies (Stanton, 2009). In 2017, Reporters Without Borders ranked Vietnam 175th out of 180 countries in the world press freedom index ("2017 World Press," n.d.). Journalists tend to avoid making comments on the government, or on government-managed products and services (Nguyen, 2010), which makes the news less free, transparent or credible.

Another reason for the low trust could be the journalists' expectation of several financial incentives offered by organizations in exchange for positive coverage (Parker et al., 2012). Vero Public Relations (2014), in an internal training document, mentioned that in Vietnamese public relations practice a small sum of cash (or if preferred, an equivalent gift card) is usually placed into the press kit or delivered to the media as part of the interaction. Moreover, in some cases, such as a major campaign roll-out, editorial content works much like a media buy. Companies can and do place articles with guarantees regarding the date of publication, content, page number and photographs. Therefore, corruption and "buying" the media's opinion have been widely accepted as normal in the media industry, and the general public has increasingly become aware of the fact and invested even less trust in these traditional publications (Parker et al., 2012).

On an international level, Vietnam's media credibility is not appreciated either. Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2003), in their exhaustive research on worldwide media transparency, ranked Vietnam third to last (among 66 countries considered) on media transparency level. The country has no comprehensive media corruption laws and no free press. The state ownership of all traditional media makes it harder to raise sensitive topics, such as politics, economic or legal issues, without being censored. Thus, Heymer (2008) concluded in his book on Vietnamese consumers and culture that in Vietnam, people have realized that articles are agenda-set, news is paid for, and opinions are bought, and people have little trust in the media.

In recent years, however, traditional media credibility in Vietnam seems to have improved. Since the establishment of the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act regulations, multinational companies do not want to pay the media, nor do they want their public relations agency representatives to pay on their behalf (Vero Public Relations, 2014). In these cases, news coverage

requires a combination of good content and good media relations. Moreover, traditional media agencies are also trying to improve their standards. Many newspapers offer additional payment to their reporters, including best story fees, to encourage high-quality content, and advertising fees, to bring new advertisers and avoid compromising of editorial content (Dinh, 2004). Some journalists and news agencies also reserve the right to make final decisions on their published content. In addition, according to research by the author (Ly-Le, 2015a), major news agencies in Vietnam still uphold their objectivity and transparency through their high standards for news reporting. Despite these changes, the issue of media credibility in Vietnam remains a controversial topic.

2.1.2. The use of social media in Vietnam.

In Vietnam as elsewhere, social media contains content that is primarily user-created and, therefore, user-controlled. According to Coombs (2014), aspects of traditional media practice do not fully apply to social media due to the interactivity of these channels. As noted in the introduction, Vietnamese organizations are much more likely to use social media for marketing and promotion than crisis communication, for which they prefer a slower response in traditional media (Van, 2013).

Within Vietnam, internet and social media penetration are growing strongly. According to the 2015 report by “We are Social,” a London-based social media agency, which has been conducting annual reports on global digital, social media and mobile marketing trends, Vietnam is among those countries with the fastest digital growth (Kemp, 2017). According to Van (2013), in Vietnam, younger people (aged 15-34) use the internet for entertainment and social networking, while older people (aged 35-64) use it for information gathering. While the worldwide average per country is 37%, the social media penetration rate in Vietnam is at 48% with 46 million users and a three-hour average daily use of social media (Kemp, 2017). Since January 2016, the number of active social media users in Vietnam has grown by 31% (Kemp, 2017), and 95% of Vietnamese internet users are Facebook users (Kemp, 2016). The number of Facebook users in Vietnam is still growing (Minh Huong, 2018) despite the 2018 Facebook privacy breach to which few Vietnamese people attended (Vu & Viet Duc, 2018). Participation in social media has become important for Vietnamese people, and Vietnamese public relations practitioners are tapping into these channels to communicate with their stakeholders, mostly for marketing purposes (Van, 2013). However, according to the author, while organizations participate in social media, many do not want to disclose much information on these channels. Some companies even tried to hide the numbers of followers on their pages from the public as they do not want to be compared to their competitors.

In Vietnam as in many other countries, social media have become integral parts of the mass media landscape and many traditional media now have online and social media versions of their

products. Also, journalists turn to social media for trending information to adapt for their traditional media content. However, experienced journalists and journalism researchers often criticize this practice because it often leads to publication of unverified information and over-reliance on convenient sources, both of which are unprofessional (Thanh Cong, 2014; Hong Chuyen, 2013).

Acknowledging the emergence of social media and the impacts of these channels on traditional media practice, the Vietnam Journalist Association held a symposium to discuss the interaction between old and new media. During the symposium, journalists highlighted that social media have challenged traditional media workers as social media shift the news making and sharing processes to the public (Quynh Trung, 2015). Further, on social media impacts, the representative from the Ministry of Information and Communication confirmed that social media have positive impacts on traditional media practice by providing quick information and supplying expert opinions as raw material for news, as well as monitoring traditional media for relevance and accuracy (Quynh Trung, 2015).

Nevertheless, in the many crises that happened in the country over the years, social media have not been prioritized communication channels, as seen in the Tan Hiep Phat example to be discussed. After a quick review of crisis communication efforts in Vietnam through published media articles on previous crises from 2010-2015, the author realized that social media have been underutilized by organizations as channels for reaching out to stakeholders. This present research thus aims to understand the perceptions of organizations and stakeholders about the usefulness of social media for crisis communication.

2.1.3. The public relations industry in Vietnam.

As stakeholder communication and crisis communication in Vietnam largely fall under the responsibility of public relations practitioners, it is helpful to describe the introduction of the public relations industry in this country. This industry landscape will later be applied to discuss the current use of social media in crisis communication. Literature about public relations in Vietnam is extremely limited. However, these sources shed some light on the development of the public relations industry in Vietnam.

One of a very limited number of studies on the Vietnamese public relations industry is by Van (2013), who conducted in-depth interviews with 29 public relations practitioners in the country who worked as international consultants, Vietnamese consultants and in-house public relations practitioners. Her research found that Vietnamese public relations practice is under-developed. As media tips and gifts are always expected to conduct relationships, and information about a government-owned business is turned away, creativity may be limited, and the public relations industry may be misunderstood as corrupt and unreliable. Another finding was that there is a serious

lack of quality public relations practitioners in Vietnam, as domestic public relations educational programs lack training about practical applications of public relations knowledge. Practitioners described students of these programs as passive, dependent, uncreative and lacking adaptability, as one participant in Van's (2013) study mentioned:

People for public relations are insufficient and unprofessional. This delays the development of public relations in Vietnam. It is because of the lack of good quality public relations education...I once taught public relations courses for an educational organization and specialized training in Ho Chi Minh City but after [a] few courses I quit this job. I felt wrong in their program. I think that a good public relations program needs to combine public relations theory and practice.

To overcome these weaknesses, some organizations send staff abroad to improve public relations knowledge, which also helps bring Western practices to local public relations firms (Van, 2013).

Earlier research by Mak (2009) also noted weaknesses of the public relations industry in the country. According to her, public relations in Vietnam is a relatively new practice and is mostly unexplored by both academic scholars and industry practitioners. The main reason for its late interest is that the business environment only recently perceived a need for public relations. In the late 1990s, economic growth was boosted by the government's Renovation ("Doi Moi" in Vietnamese) policy through which more than 30,000 businesses were created, including both private and foreign-owned organizations (James & Merchant, 2013). Later, in 2007, Vietnam joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) and revised most of its trade and investment laws, widely opening its doors to welcome foreign investors ("Vietnam financial," 2007). Since then, the country has seen brisk economic development and increasing international business opportunities (Mak, 2009), and public relations has risen as an asset to keep organizations on a competitive edge.

Before the 2010s, public relations largely remained a new concept. At that time, major companies started to realize that they needed to establish better relationships with customers through the media or events. Since then, the demand for public relations professionals has increased, resulting in the rise of many public relations agencies and internal public relations departments on both national and international levels (Hang, 2010; Sison & Sarabia-Panol, 2018).

According to the author of this dissertation, who is a public relations practitioner with eight years of experience in the Vietnam market, people in this profession are mainly from three educational backgrounds, which are in-country public relations programs, overseas (mostly U.S. public relations programs), and local journalism programs. These programs have helped to build the public relations guidelines and approaches taken in most Vietnamese practices. Within Vietnam,

very few universities offer a public relations program. Even though the increasing need for public relations experts has caught the attention of local universities, and schools have begun to offer public relations coursework, the choice remains limited. Furthermore, the public relations coursework in Vietnam focuses more on theories and pays less attention to real-life case studies or projects. As a result, as Van (2013) mentioned, about half of the public relations practitioners in Vietnam go overseas to study and are thus influenced by Western practice. The other half of public relations practitioners are from a journalism background. The journalism-trained practitioners are mostly employed in Vietnamese public relations departments or agencies, as the local public relations practice engages in a high level of media relations and copywriting. This diversity of backgrounds accounts for the many ways public relations is performed in Vietnam.

The author's viewpoint of public relations in Vietnam is supported by Nguyen Quoc Bao, CEO of Awareness I.D., a prominent Vietnamese member of the ASEAN Public Relations Network. Nguyen mentioned during a 2014 interview that the Vietnamese public relations industry lacks regulation; thus, every agency enacts its own public relations definition (Linh Lan, 2014). According to Nguyen, public relations firms in Vietnam need to codify a common standard that is based on the standards of global and local public relations. They also need to set specific regulations for the industry and boost local public relations practice to the next professional level (Linh Lan, 2014).

To conclude, public relations in Vietnam is diverse and influenced by both Western practice and the local culture. Of greatest influence, however, is American public relations practice. As more companies are considering the use of public relations, and more students and journalists seek to join the field, the industry is emerging rapidly, promising changes and development in the field.

2.1.4. Concerns of public relations in Vietnam.

An important aspect of public relations in Vietnam is its lack of focus on stakeholder and reputation management. Public relations in Vietnam is usually confused with marketing or advertising, and its role in the entire crisis management process including reputation management and crisis response receives little attention (Hang, 2010; Van, 2013). Many organizations do not have a separate department for public relations or communications, and public relations activities are usually covered by the marketing department (Van, 2013).

Even though reputation is one of the main concerns for individuals and businesses alike, Mak (2009) found that polishing a corporate reputation is done not only to meet the expectations of Vietnamese stakeholders, but also to fulfill a strong desire from the management for appreciation, approval and respect. Further, unlike in Western culture, Vietnamese people and organizations believe it is impossible or nearly impossible to repair reputation once it is tarnished (Higuchi,

1997). Therefore, in this country, a positive reputation is regarded as a quality of utmost importance, one that every person and organization must have.

According to Vietnam Report (2015), an annual report on reputation ranking of Vietnamese businesses, organizations now pay more attention to their reputation than ever. In general, they commit more time and effort to reputation management in front of the media and public stakeholders, and carefully plan for any potential reputational risks. However, reputation and business ethics are somewhat tricky in Vietnam. Do, Quilty, Milner and Longstaff (2007) conducted a series of case studies on multiple state-owned, foreign-owned and joint venture organizations in which they observed unique and conflicting characteristics of business ethics in Vietnam. These scholars found that while reputation and ethics are keys to success for business, bribery is widely associated with doing business. Media have produced reports on the topic, and the public has criticized the practice, but the situation has not changed for many years (Do et al., 2007). Therefore, it is challenging for public relations practitioners to find a balance between maintaining good practice and upholding corporate reputation.

As stated, even though reputation is a main concern of Vietnamese businesses, it is not a main concern in Vietnamese public relations practice. To explore the perceptions of public relations in Vietnam, Doan and Bilowol (2014) conducted 12 interviews with senior public relations practitioners based in Ho Chi Minh and Ha Noi, the two commercial hubs of the country. The study found that public relations in Vietnam predominantly centers on media relations and product public relations, that public relations campaigns are restricted to short-term efforts instead of building long-term relationships, and that public relations practitioners have mixed views about ethics in which some uphold ethical practice while others are more goal-oriented without much ethical concern. Van's (2013) research yielded similar results. She found that public relations practice in Vietnam focuses primarily on marketing, with half of her respondents considering public relations as equivalent to promoting products.

Although the Vietnamese public relations industry now sees an opportunity to evolve with the growing demand for reputation management support, its focus is still more on marketing. There is still a need to expand the public relations scope to stakeholder management and reputation management to meet the business demands.

2.2. The Importance of Maintaining Organizational Reputation during Crises

To understand the importance and current practice of crisis management, this chapter now look more closely at organizational reputation and its close, interchangeable concept, trust. While the first goals in crisis response are to ensure public physical safety and psychological well-being, the next is to protect an organization's reputation (Coombs, 2014). Reputation has an influence on

both the reason for and outcome of a crisis, thus affecting how an organization communicates crises. In crisis situations, researchers (Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Schultz et al., 2011) have found that the reputation of an involved organization is positively correlated to the degree of responsibility it takes for a crisis and the crisis characteristics. Further, among the antecedent studies on crisis management, Coombs and Holladay's (1996) research noted that the purpose of crisis response, especially during internally-caused social-media crises, which are the focus of this study, is to protect the reputation of the involved organization during and after the crisis. Therefore, an effective crisis message protects the good reputation of an organization.

An early definition by Fombrun and Shanley (1990) stated that reputation is an accumulative, complete and evaluated impression of an organization by groups related to the organization. Fombrun (1996) also considered reputation as an overall assessment of an organization by its stakeholders. Accordingly, researchers generally agreed that corporate reputation is, first of all, perceptual and based on personal judgments only (Fombrun, Gardberg, & Sever, 2000; Herbig & Milewicz, 1993), and reputation rests on assessments made by the stakeholders (Burke, 2011; Wartick, 2002). Since people commonly make remarks about organizations on social media, it should provide a fruitful place from which Vietnamese organizations and those of other countries can assess their reputations (Burke, 2011).

Common focal points to all the research on reputation discussed above are how an organization communicates with and manages its stakeholder groups, and how these groups perceive an organization's efforts to build rapport with the stakeholders. To develop a healthy rapport, companies and stakeholders need a mutual understanding of each other's expectations and ongoing demonstration of care for one another. Thus, to best manage reputation, both industry practice and academic studies recommend that companies maintain positive relationships with their stakeholders.

There are multiple advantages for an organization to develop and maintain a good reputation and stakeholders' trust. Greyser (1999) summarized three main strategic advantages, the first of which is that all stakeholder groups tend to prefer doing business with companies that have good reputations. Empirical research has established that reputation influences customers' choice of purchase, sustains customer loyalty, raises a company's competitiveness, attracts investors, motivates employees and prompts positive media attention (Podnar, 2004; 2015; Yoon, Guffey, & Kijewski, 1993). Second, a good reputation can differentiate an organization from its competitors and develop its legitimacy, thus benefiting the organization in both short- and long-term accomplishment. Organizations with good reputations tend to have higher financial worth in the marketplace. Studies of the Fortune 500 organizations show that companies with favorable

reputations have much better financial performance (Burke, 2011). According to Greyser (1999), the third advantage of good reputation and trust is stakeholders' support of a company in times of crisis. Not only do stakeholders typically trust and defend such a company during crises, but they also tend to forgive and rebuild their trust faster once the crisis is over. Burke (2011) examined different studies worldwide on corporate reputation during the 1992-2006 period and found that companies with good reputations were able to recover from a crisis within four to seven years, compared to 11 years for those with no significant prior reputation. Thus, reputation is an important intangible asset to an organization and is generally considered to provide a competitive advantage (Podnar, 2015).

While it takes several years to build or rebuild a positive reputation and gain trust, both can be damaged very quickly (Burke, 2011). According to Podnar (2015), stakeholders' trust in organizations and industries has decreased rapidly, and skepticism and doubt have risen. Across the world, especially in developed countries, stakeholders have shown an unprecedented low level of trust toward company motives, communication messages and business activities (Podnar, 2015). Mistrust makes a corporate reputation harder to build; and reciprocally, lack of reputation lowers the level of trust and heightens stakeholders' skepticism. To cultivate reputation, Burke (2011) recommended that organizations anticipate potential threats, respond quickly and appropriately, and display leadership. Organizations should communicate with candor when necessary. For the reasons given, reputation and trust should always be monitored and managed as part of a crisis communication effort. Social media provide obvious channels for such activities, and particularly for communicating with candor.

As mentioned in the previous section, reputation is an essential intangible asset of a business. During a crisis, and especially one in which an organization is at risk due to social media rumors or challenges, this asset may become vulnerable to damage or loss. If social media channels were to be used for crisis communication in Vietnam, they must have characteristics capable of protecting an organization's reputation. Coombs (2014) believes that for social media-initiated rumors and challenges, an organization "must be where the action is and respond in the social media where the crisis originated, extend the message to related social media, and use their [the organization's] website as a repository for additional information" (p. 157). To use social media for this purpose, however, the organization must already have a presence in social media. According to Meffert and Bierwirth's (2002) model of reputation, communication on social media must, in particular, be able to protect consumers' and the general public's perception of an organization's product and service quality, vision and leadership, social responsibility and emotional appeal. According to Coombs and Holladay (1996), the extent of reputation damage during crises is

positively related to the perceived responsibility of an organization, which is embedded in the typical characteristics of a crisis, considered next.

2.3. Defining a Crisis

Outside academia, the term “crisis” is often casually and overly used. People may refer to a personal crisis, an industry crisis, an economic crisis or an organizational crisis. Among these types of crises, the *organizational crisis* gathers much attention from academia and many definitions of the term exist (Ulmer et al., 2015; Zaremba, 2010). For example, in an early study on organizational crisis, Hermann (1963) defined a crisis as a troubling event that is characterized by having an element of surprise, creating a threat and requiring a quick response. It has an abrupt happening and intensity. It creates threatening circumstances for an organization, and negatively affects an organization and its stakeholders. Further, a crisis also has the utmost urgency that requires an immediate response.

Expanding from Hermann’s notions, McCoy (2014) and Ulmer et al. (2015) have described five recurring, key components of an organizational crisis. First, an organizational crisis is unexpected. Although organizations may be able to perceive that certain types of crises are likely and develop plans for managing them, when a crisis will begin and its level of intensity cannot be known. Further, the boundaries of a crisis may exceed any crisis management plan. Second, a crisis involves a disruption of routines. A crisis is an event that requires extreme non-routine measures to manage, which differentiates it from problems that occur daily in all organizations. Third, a crisis can produce tremendous uncertainty for both management and stakeholders. People cannot know all causes and effects of a crisis without proper investigation. The fourth component is threat, as it affects an organization and all stakeholders involved. It can tarnish an organization’s reputation, work performance and even permanently destroy a business. Finally, despite its negative impact, a crisis can also create opportunities for an organization to learn, make strategic changes and improve business performance.

In addition to the above aspects, Coombs (2014) offered a general definition of an organizational crisis, which is quoted in many studies. According to Coombs, a crisis is the perception of an abrupt incident that impacts stakeholders’ perceived interest in an organization and requires immediate attention and reaction. Since it is perceptual, if a stakeholder thinks an event is a crisis, organizations should deal with it as if it is a crisis; if the event is left untreated, stakeholder expectancies will be breached. A poorly handled crisis can seriously harm an organization’s reputation, legitimacy and performance, thus resulting in negative future outcomes. To help organizations recognize a crisis, assess the level of perceived responsibility and prepare accordingly, and to make the crisis communication effort easier, researchers have developed

categorization systems of crisis types. Coombs (2014) has provided the most recent way to categorize a crisis, which is whether it primarily concerns “public safety and welfare,” and thus can be managed using traditional public relations practices, or whether it begins or grows in social media and therefore primarily involves reputation management (p. 22). He defined these two categories as *traditional* and *social media* crises. *Traditional crises* are typically concerned with the wellbeing and safety of the public as well as disturbances to organizational operations. The practice of crisis management developed around traditional crises (Coombs, 2014). In contrast, *social media crises* are crises that begin or grow larger through communication on social media. These crises are generally aimed at damaging an organization’s reputation, although they may also concern the same issues as traditional crises. Conway et al. (2007) used the phrase “Internet crisis potential” to describe social media crises (p. 214). These researchers saw such crises as arising out of stakeholder concerns regarding ethics and corporate social responsibility along with features of the Internet that allow stakeholders to raise their voices.

Coombs further separated social media crises into three types, which are *organizational misuse social media crises*, *dissatisfied customer social media crises*, and *challenges*.

Organizational misuse of social media refers to organizational messages that break acceptable communication on a channel. For example, in 2014, BestMua, an e-commerce website in Vietnam, publicly criticized its Facebook followers for giving BestMua bad reviews, and directly argued with each negative comment. The criticizing post was read by 120,000 people and received 290 comments. The action could have become a crisis for BestMua if the founder had not apologized (Chung Anh, 2014).

Coombs said that dissatisfied customer social media crises are actually customer service problems. In Vietnam, research using a social media monitoring tool to analyze all public posts in the country from January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2016 showed that 14% of crises during that period were initiated by a dissatisfied customer’s complaint or feedback about a company’s product or service (“Communication crises in Vietnam,” 2017).

Finally, challenges occur when stakeholders perceive that an organization is acting irresponsibly or inappropriately or has set policies that could lead to such action. Stakeholders deliver challenges when their expectations are unmet. Their aim in delivering a challenge is to harm an organization’s reputation.

The concept of a *challenge* can be further broken down into three types, which are “(1) organic, (2) exposé, and (3) villain” (Coombs, 2014). An *organic challenge* occurs when previous behaviors of an organization are no longer acceptable to stakeholders due to a change in stakeholder values. The aim of an organic challenge is to bring organizational behavior into line with

stakeholder beliefs. A Vietnamese example of this is Vedan's crisis in 2008, when the company discharged untreated waste into a river; as a result, Vedan received serious reputational damage and had to pay US \$5.5 million in compensation (Dtinews, 2016). Such discharge had been their usual practice, but as the stakeholders paid more attention to the environment over the years, this practice became a challenge to their reputation.

An *exposé challenge* occurs when stakeholders perceive that an organization is not acting as it says it does. For example, such a challenge occurs when an organization states that it is behaving in an environmentally sound manner but is found not to be doing so. In Vietnam, an *exposé challenge* can be seen in the Formosa crisis in 2016. This is also an environmental case. Formosa always insisted that its waste was discharged properly, and the company had spent US \$45 million to upgrade the treatment system to be environmentally friendly ("Hanoi admits Formosa Plastic Group," 2016). However, in 2016, Formosa was accused of discharging untreated waste to the ocean, resulting in 70 tons of dead fish and sea creatures, as well as contamination of 200-kilometers of coastline (Associated Press, 2016). The social media community was outraged and demanded that Formosa be investigated thoroughly. The company was exposed as responsible and had to pay US \$500 million in compensation (Associated Press, 2016).

Finally, a *villain challenge* is one in which stakeholders wish to portray an organization as an entity that needs to change. Such a challenge is typically offered by professional activist stakeholders who have a long-running argument with an organization. In Vietnam, a villain challenge could be the case between Tan Hiep Phat (THP) and the public, where the public has continuously perceived the company as callously reporting its customers to the police who eventually jail them. This case is described in more detail in section 2.7.

Prior to the advent of social media, crises were primarily categorized as those caused by factors external or internal to an organization, or those caused by unintentional or intentional acts (Capozzi & Rucci, 2013; Lerbinger, 1997; Ulmer et al., 2015). Externally-caused crises are primarily perceived as unintentional while internally-caused crises are primarily perceived as intentional. Lerbinger (2012) described three categories of crises, which are crises of the physical environment, crises of the human climate, and crises of management failure. There can, of course, be overlap among these different types of crises. For example, a technological failure, which is physical, may be the result of mismanagement, which is internal.

Traditional or external crises include events that occur in the physical environment, such as natural disasters, disease outbreaks, economy downturns and technology failures. External crises are unforeseeable and uncontrollable by organization management. Even ethical organizations with careful planning and strict safety regulations are vulnerable to external crises (Ulmer et al., 2015).

Internal crises, or those that typically appear today in social media, are initiated by perceived intentional acts and management failures that may occur as a result of mismanagement, skewed company values, deception or misconduct.

Lee (2004) conducted a survey on individuals' perception of crisis responsibility as a function of causal attributions with 385 respondents, aged from 18 to 57, who were well-educated and either a student or a working individual. These respondents indicated that during internal crises, organizations are perceived to be more responsible for the crisis and will be under more scrutiny than during external crises. The respondents also indicated that if an internal crisis happens and an organization denies responsibility, its stakeholders will become less positive, less sympathetic and less trusting of the organization. Such results can easily destroy the stakeholders' value in an organization and strongly disrupt its business (Lerbinger, 1997).

As described by Ulmer et al. (2015), internal, or intentional, crises include the following types: sabotage, workplace violence, poor employee relationships, poor risk management, hostile takeovers and unethical leadership. Sabotage consists of intentionally damaging acts performed by an internal party. Workplace violence refers to escalating violent acts committed by employees, usually resulting from their perceived mistreatment by an organization. Poor employee relationships result from unsatisfactory relationships between employees and management and usually lead to wide-scale harm to organization reputation. Poor risk management is an organization's inability to effectively respond to potential problems. Hostile takeovers are takeovers over which the current management is unwilling to agree. Lastly, unethical leadership is the most inclusive type of crisis, which happens when an organization is the ultimate cause of a crisis and widely responsible for it.

Among the above types of crises, unethical leadership generates the most damage for an involved organization and makes it the most difficult type of crisis from which to recover (Ulmer et al., 2015). In this research, the author only considers social media challenges.

2.4. Crisis Management Consists of Three Overlapping Stages

To effectively manage and study a crisis, researchers have long adopted the three-stage model of pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis. Even though no individual is identified as the model creator, it is widely used in research and is recommended by many crisis communication scholars (e.g., Coombs, 2014; Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003). According to Coombs (2014), one reason that this model emerged is that the three stages are broad enough to subsume stages from other crisis management approaches.

As crisis management means preventing and lessening the negative results of a crisis to protect a company and its stakeholders from harm (Coombs, 2014), this model defines crisis management as an ongoing, proactive effort to not only respond to crises but also prevent them

from happening. According to Coombs (2014), the pre-crisis stage involves crisis signal detection, prevention and preparation. This stage entails all possible actions for identifying a company's vulnerabilities and for structuring a crisis communication system. Coombs (2014) believes that social media plays a key role in the pre-crisis stage as it is here that organizations can listen for any hint of dissatisfaction with an organization or its products or services. Next, the crisis stage follows the pre-crisis with a trigger event that marks the start of a crisis. This stage ends when a crisis is considered resolved. The crisis stage deals with crisis recognition and containment, focusing on crisis response and communication with stakeholders. Finally, the post-crisis stage includes evaluating the whole crisis management effort, learning from the crisis and following-up with stakeholders. The purpose of the post-crisis stage is to ensure the crisis is truly over, the organization is better prepared for the next crisis, and the stakeholders maintain overall positive impressions of the organization.

In a thorough crisis management plan, these stages overlap and reinforce each other. It is possible for social media to be integrated into all three stages to strengthen the efficiency of crisis management activities, which will be discussed in section 2.8.

2.5. Considerations and Steps for Crisis Response

Ulmer and colleagues (2015) aimed to give crisis communicators key elements to communicate during a crisis and recommended five steps for effectively responding as well as evaluating the response: (1) determining goals, (2) partnering with crisis audiences, (3) identifying the cause or causes of a crisis, (4) understanding the diversity of audiences and responding to various audiences, and (5) evaluating the success or failure of the response.

Since goals guide strategy, the first step in crisis response is to determine the goals for managing a crisis. According to Coombs (2014), the desired goals should include not only protecting an organization, but also reducing the impacts of a crisis on those affected. Zaremba (2010) noted that if a crisis communication effort starts at the pre-crisis phase, goals should include preparing for an upcoming crisis. Translating from these desired goals, some strategic actions may include developing relationships and trying to understand stakeholders in the pre-crisis stage, anticipating crises, planning the communication process during a crisis, limiting the level of distress among stakeholders, minimizing damage to both an organization and its stakeholders, protecting corporate reputation, generating favorable media coverage, telling the public about organizational missions and values, and maintaining stock price and market shares (Coombs, 2014; Lerbinger, 1997; Ulmer et al., 2015; Zaremba, 2010).

The second step in crisis communication is partnering with crisis audiences (Coombs, 2014; Ulmer et al., 2015). These audiences consist of any media and organizational stakeholders who are

directly or indirectly affected by a crisis. When partnering, organizations should prioritize and consider who they want to address during crises and avoid manipulating audiences to think and act in ways that organizations want (Zaremba, 2010).

Further, although the purpose is to engage with all audiences and stakeholders, organizations still need to consider the diversity of their audiences. Audiences may be categorized based on their everyday relationships with a business, as victims, employees, competitors, consumers or media groups. Each group requires different communication tactics and messages (Coombs, 2014). Alternatively, stakeholders may be divided based on their importance to the success of a business and their active roles in a crisis, as primary and secondary stakeholders, or based on the influence and existing relationship with the involved organizations. Considering stakeholder diversity also means paying attention to cultural effects. A culturally-sensitive approach is suggested for culturally-diverse audiences (Ulmer et al., 2015).

The third step is identifying the cause or causes of a crisis. Without a cause determined, crisis communication cannot move forward. Ulmer and colleagues (2015) suggested that organizations need to actively find the root cause of any crisis, clear stakeholders' uncertainty and plan solutions accordingly. At the same time, organizations must stay close to the media and other information sources to update them with crisis management progress and correct any misleading speculations.

The fourth step is responding to the various audiences. First, organizations must decide which units of information should or should not be relayed to stakeholders and construct the messages respectively (Zaremba, 2010). Next, as McLean and Power (2009) and Ulmer and colleagues (2015) suggested, communicators must reach out to each individual or group affected by a crisis and provide a response message that clearly explains the impact and extent of the crisis, as well as what steps are being taken to manage it. There is no single communication channel or message that works well with all target audiences (Ulmer et al., 2015). An appropriate response should also acknowledge different reactions of audiences, assure people that the organization will stay in contact, and take extra care to avoid further damage or similar crises in the future (Zaremba, 2010). Further, the message should be empathic. It should be people-centered and show care for stakeholders instead of focusing on benefits to the organization (Ulmer et al., 2015).

Finally, the last step of crisis communication is evaluating its success or failure. When a crisis is considered over, organizations should assess the effort and discuss how to improve crisis communication in similar future crises (Zaremba, 2010).

Further, to best implement all these steps, organizations should choose a credible spokesperson and reliable communication channels. Choosing a credible, empathic and effective

spokesperson is an important aspect in crisis communication (McLean & Power, 2009). Although the media and stakeholders can seek information from anyone involved, the presence of an official spokesperson shows how much an organization cares about a crisis. If an organization does not provide a senior-level spokesperson, stakeholders may believe that the organization is taking the situation lightly. If an organization uses a weak communicator, it may fail to convey a crisis communication message at all. Further, a poor communicator may even worsen the crisis.

Lastly, in crisis communication and crisis response, organizations should also pay attention to the use of communication channels, as channels facilitate how a message gets to audiences. The decision of which channels should be used to relay messages depends on the nature of an audience, the level of responsibility and reputation of an organization, and the nature of a message (Zaremba, 2010). A traditional information loop during a crisis includes call centres, switchboards and reception (McLean & Power, 2009). External stakeholders and media usually contact organizations through these channels to reach management or designated spokespersons for official information. Therefore, it is necessary to provide staff members responsible for these channels with updated progress, key messages and communication directions. Additionally, McLean and Power (2009) recommended that organizations leverage the internet as a cost effective, extensive and engaging response platform. The use of the internet during crisis response may cover information-sharing on a company's own website, consumer websites, social networking sites, and the activation of a "dark" website, a website specifically dedicated to conveying information about the crisis (Coombs, 2014). Some companies in Vietnam have started to use this "dark" website tactic in preparation for potential crises. With the addition of internet channels, many advantages are introduced to the crisis response mix, including a two-way communication mechanism that encourages public feedback, real-time updated information feeds, multimedia inclusion, and more widespread information delivery to relevant stakeholders.

2.6. General Advice for Crisis Response

One main principle for maintaining an organization's reputation during a crisis is to show that the organization is able to fully and tactfully manage the crisis. To demonstrate this ability, organizations need to provide stakeholders with accurate, timely, consistent, relevant and frequent information. This management aspect helps assure the public and avoid impractical expectations (Coombs, 2014; McLean & Power, 2009). As crises are information-driven, crisis communication centers on how to manage information flow and how to craft information to have positive effects on stakeholders. However, according to Gilman (2004), people's ability to process information in stressful situations, such as in a crisis, may be reduced by up to 80%. Therefore, crisis

communication must be handled with great care to produce clear and meaningful messages. This advice appears relevant to all types of crises both in the West and in Vietnam.

Clear response content is an important factor when conveying messages to stakeholders and accommodating these goals. Coombs (2014) identified three sequential categories of crisis response content: instructing information, adjusting information and reputation management. The first category, instructing information, is about telling stakeholders how to protect themselves. This response applies to both external crises (e.g., disaster situations) and internal crises, such as announcing product hazards and identifying products immediately before a product recall. Crisis managers need to anticipate stakeholders' concerns for protection when developing instructing messages. The next category is adjusting information, which aims to reassure stakeholders that the organization is proactively addressing the crisis, which helps to rebuild stakeholder confidence, and expressing concern to those affected. Finally, the last category of crisis response is reputation management. Unlike the previous two stakeholder-oriented types of response, this type of response revolves around the organization, building upon previous empathic messages to attentively rebuild or promote corporate reputation. This response will be considered later in more detail.

Among studies on message strategies in crisis communication, Benoit's (1997) is one of the more frequently cited. Benoit proposed five crisis communication message options for repairing the image of an individual or an organization: denial, evasion of responsibility, reduction of offensiveness, corrective action and mortification or apology. In Benoit's model, *denial* is denying the existence of a crisis, followed by an aggressive advance toward the less powerful people who have reported otherwise. *Evasion of responsibility* is attempting to weaken an organization's responsibility by making excuses or justification. *Reduction of offensiveness* is trying to gain public approval and reduce negative feelings. *Corrective action* is claiming that an organization will actively resolve the problems and make changes. Finally, *mortification* is admitting responsibility and trying to win forgiveness and acceptance from stakeholders. In Vietnam, from the author's observation of the crisis correspondence of Vietnamese companies to the media from 2010-2015, denial and evasion of responsibility are the options most frequently chosen for first response. They are also the stakeholders' least preferred responses, as many crises escalated after these two types of responses were used.

Many academic studies have since adopted Benoit's framework. Coombs (1998) concluded that defensive strategies (such as denial, evasion of responsibility and reduction of offensiveness) are more suitable for external crises, while accommodative strategies (corrective action and mortification or apology) are more suitable for internal crises. Furthermore, Coombs and Holladay (2008) asserted that corrective action, when combined with expressions of remorse, sympathy or

regret, is the most effective strategy for both crisis victims and the general audience. In general, strategies that reflect compassion are the most powerful crisis communication approach, whether they are used alone or combined with other strategies (Coombs, 2014). An honest, candid, open and consistent stream of messages is advocated by both communication scholars and crisis communication experts in the industry (Smithson & Venette, 2013; Stephens et al., 2005). However, in business practice, most organizations aim to distance themselves from crises, appearing uninvolved and unaffected. In Vietnam, the author has found from preliminary research that during crises, organizations also most often tend to use the denial strategy. Organizations appear to use the denial strategy regardless of the situation, and employ denial alone or with other accommodative strategies. Such strategies typically result in inconsistent, ineffective response messages and negative consequences (Coombs, 2014; Kim, Avery, & Lariscy, 2009).

Consistency is important to build credibility in messages communicated. Even though different stakeholder groups require different levels of responsiveness in crisis communication, the response content should be consistent across all groups and channels so the message appears more trustworthy (Coombs, 2014). Being consistent does not mean providing only the single voice of a company spokesperson. Stakeholders may seek other unofficial spokespersons, such as employees, for information. A crisis communication team thus needs to ensure that a consistent message is delivered throughout the organization (McLean & Power, 2009).

Openness is also a basic principle for effective crisis communication. During a crisis, organizations must be available for questions and willing to disclose information in a most honest way. If an organization does not respond to a request, it risks damaging its relationship with the stakeholders (McLean & Power, 2009).

In addition, Coombs (2014) stressed that a crisis response must be polite. If responding on social media, the communication must follow the rules of the social media channel that it is using and strive at all times to be polite with stakeholders. Negative or rude responses can easily escalate and worsen a situation.

On this crisis communication topic, much research has been dedicated to identifying the most effective crisis communication messages for containing crises, as seen above. However, very little research has paid attention to how a careful selection of channels can support crisis communication. This study thus aims to discuss the current and potential use of social media channels for crisis communication in Vietnam.

2.7. A Vietnamese Crisis Example – Tan Hiep Phat Crisis and Social Media Implications

One of the bigger crises in Vietnam that started and grew on social media was the Tan Hiep Phat (THP) crisis. It is a recent case that shows the ability of social media to shake one of the major

companies in Vietnam. Although this research is not based upon case studies, the THP crisis communication strategy and response are still fresh in public memory, and the crisis provides a useful example for analyzing organizational and stakeholder points of view. The purpose of using this case was not to assess or review how THP managed (or did not manage) the crisis. THP was introduced as an example to consider whether if social media had been used, the situation would have been better. This example demonstrates how stakeholders leveraged social media channels to express their opinions and catch the attention of other consumers and the wider public. The example also shows how stakeholders closely followed the coverage on traditional media and amplified it through social media channels with more comments and concerns. It is also an example of how an organization neglected social media monitoring and the use of social media in crisis response. THP was late to reply to the incident and as a result, the online conversations were left to grow on their own without any direct feedback from the organization. The THP example will be used during the data collection portion of this study.

THP is a Vietnamese enterprise that manufactures bottled drinks. It is one of a few brands in Vietnam that can be compared with global giants like Pepsi or Coca Cola (Duc Son, 2015). In 2012, THP, with its high-quality products, was voted by consumers to be a representative brand for Vietnam (“Tan Hiep Phat,” 2013). However, in January 2015, THP experienced a fateful turn when a restaurant owner was arrested for supposedly blackmailing THP. The owner said that he found a fly in a THP drink and reported this incident to the company (Thuy Tien, 2015). He was later accused by THP of purposely putting the fly into the drink and trying to extort 500 million VND from the company (Mai Anh, 2015). Further media investigation showed that this arrest was not the first one initiated by THP’s report; since 2009, instead of tactfully handling customer issues such as this one, THP always chose to settle in court. Many customers who reported problems with THP products were detained by the police, as THP sued them for tampering with the products and trying to blackmail the business (Thuy Tien, 2015). People began to question THP’s product quality and business ethics. Many doubted if the products were actually as good for people’s health as advertised and wondered if THP cared for its customers at all, especially when it did not hesitate to have the courts jail them (Hoang Tung, 2017). According to Coombs’ (2014) typology of social media crises, the THP crisis would be classified as a *challenge*, which occurs “when stakeholders perceive that an organization’s behaviors and/or policies are inappropriate or irresponsible” (p. 23). The aim of stakeholders taking up a challenge is to harm an organization’s reputation. In the THP case as in other challenges, the stakeholders aimed to paint the company as a villain that needed to change. According to Lerbinger (2012), an organization such as THP would be especially vulnerable to crises because: (a) it is a highly visible and large in the Vietnamese market, and (b)

any bad news about it would be memorable as the organization sells convenience goods that people purchase all the time.

Responding to the media investigation, most readers agreed that THP managers kept evading questions about product quality and whether they framed their customers (Hoang Tung, 2017). As a result, customers joined forces to find faulty THP products. Many reports of foreign material found in THP products surged from across the country. To see which social media groups were more prominent and vocal about this case, the author conducted an online search and found a Facebook page called “Boycott Tan Hiep Phat.” In less than a month, this group was founded and gathered more than 30,000 supporters. The page compiled and shared all news and comments regarding the THP “fly” crisis, thus creating a trending news flow on most Facebook feeds. In 2018, this page had more than 41,000 followers, a video clip had more than 1.2 million views, and the number was much higher during the time of crisis, not to mention there were also closed groups whose numbers of members are not public. At the same time, a topic named “From now on we boycott Tan Hiep Phat” was created on one of the most popular Vietnamese forums, Voz. Over a month, the topic achieved almost 80,000 views and 500 replies, with daily member engagement. Figure 1 is a chart from Google Trends, showing a sudden increase of people searching online for THP information. In February 2015, attention on THP news rose 100 times higher than that in the previous months with almost 100,000 searches, and the trend stayed significantly high until April 2015.

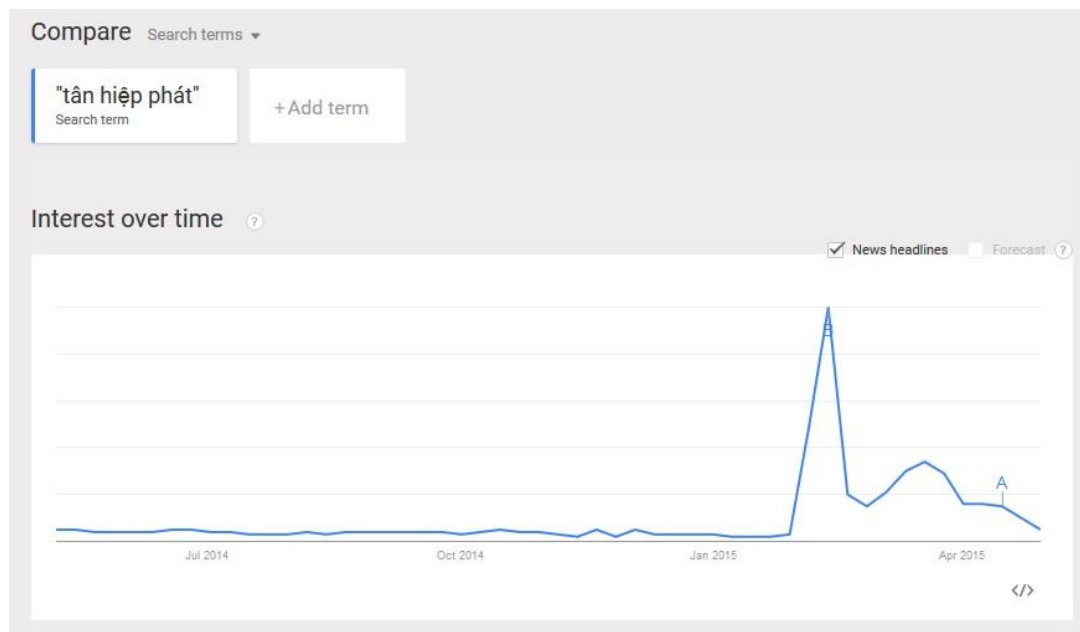


Figure 1. Online interest in “Tan Hiep Phat” news from May 2014 – April 2015.

Through social media, the sentiment multiplied and THP products were boycotted throughout the major cities in Vietnam. According to Lam Hoang (2015), as product sales dropped significantly three months into the crisis, the THP chairman had to admit, “If we don’t get [the customers’] support, we can only last for another 1-2 years.”

In December 2015, the restaurant owner was sentenced to seven years behind bars. In court, THP still repeatedly put all the responsibility on the customers and did not acknowledge any problems with the products. After the case, it did not show any concern for the confused public (Trang Lam, 2015). The trial once again stirred up the public and put THP under a negative light. On search queries with the “Tan Hiep Phat” term, the prominent results always include the word “fly” and “trial,” and on all social media channels, most users relentlessly shared their anger, criticism, sarcasm and boycott messages (Trang Lam, 2015).

In its crisis response effort, THP never replied to the enflamed online community. It let the case continue. The only channels through which THP communicated, and did so hesitantly, were those of traditional media. THP offered its version of the story through press conferences and interviews and neglected the online comments. Expecting an official reply on the THP fanpage or direct replies to their comments on different pages and groups, but finding themselves ignored before and during the crisis, online community members became more and more vocal. Until December 2015, the social media campaign to boycott THP continued and became a trending topic on the Facebook news feed. Many branding and crisis specialists have asserted that THP made a fatal mistake by underestimating the power of customers and social media (Duy Linh & Duy Anh, 2015). At the end of 2016, while still not admitting any guilt, THP’s general manager finally publicly apologized to the customers on the company’s website, Facebook and YouTube channels that the company may have hurt the customers’ feelings by not saying anything and he wished for the customers’ support in the future (Doan Phong, 2016). However, through to the present time, many customers and stakeholders still remember the case and continue to boycott the company (Hoang Diep, 2016).

This THP case is referred to later in this study in the interviews with Vietnamese public relations practitioners and stakeholders as an example of an internal organizational crisis. The participants can relate to this case to provide in-depth feedback on what stakeholders expected of THP’s crisis response and how social media use might have changed the situation during this crisis.

2.8. Crisis Communication Using Social Media

This section reviews Western literature on how crisis communication has changed due to social media, advantages and limitations of social media channels for crisis communication, and scholarly advice for using social media.

2.8.1. Key changes in crisis communication due to social media.

The affordances of social media along with stakeholder use of these channels have disrupted established models of crisis communication and are pressing change in organizational practice. Particularly, crisis communication is being pushed towards becoming a two-way process, which has long been advised by Grunig (1992). While social media provide organizations with additional channels to communicate directly, quickly, and either individually or *en masse* with stakeholders, these channels also empower stakeholders, allowing them to move closer to organizations and potentially have their needs attended to more immediately than ever before (Kelly, Kerry, & Drennan, 2010).

According to Fraustino and Liu's (2017) review of public-oriented approaches to crisis communication, strategy for using these channels in crisis communication now places less focus on organizational image and aims to integrate stakeholder needs into organizational decision-making and communication. Reputation management is therefore more incorporated into stakeholder management. With social media channels, reputation has shifted even further away from organizational control towards stakeholders (Burke, 2011). Overall, Schultz et al. (2012) regard social media as the "first public relations medium" because social media channels enable more interactive and symmetric communication between organizations and their publics, thereby promoting communication that is more efficient and ethical.

2.8.2. Advantages and limitations of social media channels for crisis communication.

Social media channels offer both advantages and limitations for crisis communication compared to using traditional media channels alone. Advantages of social media channels are their speed, ease-of-reach, and interactivity, which together allow organizations to send messages to stakeholders that are more personal, authentic, and direct (Schultz et al., 2012). With these advantages, an organization that uses social media for crisis communication may appear more caring, concerned and committed, which could lead stakeholders to have a more positive overall impression of the organization during and after a crisis (Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007; Kerkhof et al., 2011a).

Regarding speed in crisis communication, the need for it is stressed in literature and practice. The speed of communication through social media is clearly an advantage of these channels when information needs to reach stakeholders quickly. Failure of organizations to quickly provide the media and stakeholders with information typically results in criticism, rumors and speculation. Crisis communication therefore requires immediate dissemination of information across stakeholder groups (McLean & Power, 2009; Coombs, 2014).

In crisis communication, it is also important for organizations to not only quickly but easily reach all stakeholders. In social media, ease-of-reach is achieved through five distinct features of this media that, as explained by Coombs (2014), may make the channels useful for crisis communication:

- Participation: Any social media user can create, distribute and give feedback on content.
- Openness: Social media owners allow others to post and give feedback on content on their channels.
- Conversation: The channels facilitate dialogue.
- Communities: People with the same interest can form groups easily and quickly.
- Connectedness: One content item may be heavily linked to another, thereby creating a “web” of information.

Together, these five features help social media users including organizations to reach one another more easily during a crisis. As noted by several researchers (Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Jaques, 2014; Pursuit, 2013), organizations can make themselves easily reachable on social media by setting up a presence in the channels used by stakeholders well before any crisis occurs. To reinforce their presence, organizations should communicate on these channels frequently.

Another strength of social media for crisis communication is the opportunity for interactivity in these channels. Firstly, this strength allows organizations to monitor what stakeholders are saying, and secondly, it allows them to communicate directly with groups or individuals. Because of interactivity, organizations can more easily study how stakeholders communicate about issues, which allows organizations to plan ahead. According to Coombs and Holladay (2014), the voices of stakeholders on social media are clear indicators of the current reputational status of an organization and whether stakeholders accept an organization’s crisis response efforts. Even though online comments may not be a representative sample of all concerned stakeholders, they still provide some reputational indices that are useful in crisis evaluation. Regarding direct communication, a crisis manager can view social media posts to assess stakeholder satisfaction with an organization’s communication and can contact individual stakeholders directly for more detailed feedback (Coombs, 2014). Social media channels may allow individuals to give organizations their email addresses and phone numbers to directly contact them.

Social media channels can also allow organizations to have more personalized and authentic conversations with stakeholders during crises. According to Kerkhof et al. (2011a), responses in social media usually contain informal language, with a personalized touch, and therefore, people may perceive such messages as more reasoned, personal, authentic, and transparent than responses

in traditional media channels. Ford (2011) and Kelleher (2009) have expressed since social media messages sent during crises may be conversational, organizations are well able to demonstrate their warmth, empathy, and compassion toward stakeholders. Such communication can win trust and satisfaction from stakeholders. Victims of a crisis, in particular, may feel like their voices are heard and that they are cared for. Therefore, crisis communication on social media may make organizations seem more responsible and committed.

Social media channels, however, also have limitations for crisis communication. Further, some researchers (Kent, 2010; Kent & Taylor, 2018) express that these channels as currently designed are not capable of supporting dialogue, which may be necessary for some crisis communication. According to Lane (2018):

[Dialogue is] a special form of two-way communication characterized by participants' mutual positive orientation toward each other, and the communication in which they engage... [I]t occurs when participants have a desire to interact respectfully and openly with each other beyond the superficial; and a belief that this interaction is possible through communication, which will lead to outcomes that are mutually beneficial and acceptable. (p. 657)

Kent and Taylor (2002) described a dialogue in public relations as having five features, which are *mutuality*, *propinquity*, *empathy*, *risk*, and *commitment*. Mutuality refers to recognizing that an organization and its publics are in a relationship of equality. Propinquity refers to an organization's willingness and ability to spontaneously interact with its publics and have immediacy in its interaction. Empathy refers to an organization's willingness to support and confirm the goals and interests of its publics. Risk refers to an organization's willingness to communicate with individuals and groups on their own terms. Finally, commitment refers to "the extent to which an organization gives itself over to dialogue, interpretation and understanding in its interactions with publics" (p. 25). The need for propinquity alone in dialogue makes social media unsuitable for this purpose because the channels, as currently designed, are not multi-modal. Something like Skype would be more suitable. Also, the risk involved in engaging in dialogue on social media is likely too high for organizations. Especially during crises, organizations seek to avoid risk.

The speed of communication on social media, which was previously discussed as an advantage, can also be a limitation for crisis communication as can the possibility for unwanted crisis exposure, lack of control over stakeholder messages, limited reach to some target audiences, and lack of credibility of some information on social media.

Although the fast speed of social media channels enables businesses to manage crises more rapidly and proactively, Jaques (2014) noted that a crisis communicated on social media can also

escalate much more quickly. The speed with which information can travel on social media can allow negative news to create organizational damage within minutes, and the containment of such a crisis is much more difficult than during the pre-social media age (Ford, 2011). However, a crisis on social media can be over just as quickly as it started (Jaques, 2014). Even if it ends quickly, however, the information about it will linger in social media channels so people can easily look back at it. Therefore, stakeholders and the media can easily link a new issue to previous issues or crises, and knowledge of the older information can worsen a situation.

Another disadvantage of social media channels for organizations is the constant exposure of such organizations to a public that is looking for negative news. With the help of social media, a much wider range of stakeholders including consumers and the media can conveniently monitor organizational behaviours, thereby increasing the chance that some event will become a crisis (Ford, 2011). Once a piece of information develops into a crisis, it can spread virally within and across multiple social media channels thereby giving an organization even greater negative exposure. The spread of a crisis makes transparent every communication move of an organization and may increase the expectations of stakeholders.

Communication on social media channels may be considered both controllable and uncontrollable in that an organization can control its own content on social media but is not able to control stakeholders' interpretations, comments or sharing of the content. As Ford (2011) assessed, organizations may have a privileged voice during a crisis, but they are not the only voice. Not only do organizational crisis communicators have less control over social media messages, but the information they share can be misinterpreted, and the publics or witnesses to a crisis can challenge the narrative and have their own opinions.

Next, organizations are concerned that social media channels can only reach certain groups of stakeholders such as younger and urban people. To effectively manage a crisis, the chosen communication channels must reach all stakeholders. In Vietnam, social media channels are favoured by younger people and for many crises, could not be used alone to communicate all crises because not everyone has access.

A final limitation of social media for crisis communication is that many stakeholders perceive that information sent through these channels is credible (Richter, 2014) because it has not passed by a gatekeeper. Gatekeeping is a process of selecting and deciding which stories can pass through the traditional news medium "gates" to reach audiences (McQuail, 2010). In the traditional media news routine, gatekeeping functions to shape, handle, distribute or withhold information before it goes to the public, thereby constructing social reality (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, & Wrigley, 2001). Gatekeeping aims to make traditional media content more objective, credible, and

newsworthy (Siah, Bansal, & Pang, 2010). However, in Vietnam as mentioned earlier, all traditional media are owned and operated by the government, which makes the gatekeeping purpose questionable as news tends to support the government's products and services. Nonetheless, Vietnamese organizations are still required to follow the law so if they use traditional media to communicate about crises, it may appear that they are being truthful about their actions. In any case, their communication is being made through an arm of the government and it may appear that the organization's actions are being watched.

In crisis communication, the gatekeeping process is reflected by choice of sources. Reporters and editors need to filter through rumors and conflicting stories to build a trustworthy and newsworthy article. There are many factors that affect a journalist's source selection including assertiveness, perceived credibility, accessibility and quotability (Stempel & Culbertson, 1984).

While individuals working in traditional media solely assess sources and newsworthiness, in the social media realm, these factors are evaluated collectively by broad audiences. Unlike in traditional media, where news is reported and disseminated by professionals, social media does not have a gatekeeper or reporting standards, and users can share whatever news they deem relevant to others from any source they think credible. Therefore, determining the credibility of a news source depends on social media users. Much research (e.g., Vasterman, 2005; Metzger, 2007; Xu, 2013) has shown that online news readers find it difficult to weave through and sort out irrelevant news stories. Therefore, online news is difficult for people to critically assess. To cope, users make quick judgments of online news based on their past experiences and immediately identify the content of interest. In this way, users selectively expose themselves to stories that demonstrate more personal relevance (user's motivation) and newsworthiness (user's ability to evaluate) (Metzger, 2007; Xu, 2013). The newsworthiness of a social media news piece is conditioned by the number of online mentions, source credibility and recency (Xu, 2013). Vasterman (2005) found that the more frequently a piece of news is mentioned, the more important and urgent people perceive it to be. Xu (2013) found that the more frequently a piece is mentioned, the more likely a user is to read through a full story and follow up. Moreover, Metzger (2007) noted that the credibility of an online news message is assessed through peer review, such as feedback about products or sources given on some websites, and whether a message is shared by a friend or a random person. This peer review allows users to pool their collective intelligence and experiences to evaluate the trustworthiness and credibility of a message.

Without professional gatekeeping, the credibility of a social media news story, such as a story about a crisis, may be controversial. In its 2014 report, the Pew Research Center (Richter, 2014) noted that less than 10% of U.S. adults regarded most social media outlets as an acceptable

way to receive news, with the sole exception of Facebook, where 30% of the respondents stated that it was a key news source. However, Siah et al. (2010) and Sutton et al. (2007) found that since social media content is collectively sought and created, many online news readers now consider it more relevant, interesting and credible than traditional media. Many people now use this content as an additional news source. Several researchers (e.g., Austin et al., 2012; Procopio & Procopio, 2007) have found that during crises, some stakeholders perceive social media channels to be just as credible as traditional media because social media provide up-to-date, unfiltered information and peer-support to crisis victims. In Vietnam, the Media Department of the Ministry of Information and Communications confirmed that Vietnamese people have been increasingly trusting of social media and many choose these channels over traditional media for information (Bao Dien Tu DCSVN, 2012).

In summary, social media offer both advantages and limitations for crisis communication. The advantages are the speed, ease-of-reach, and interactivity of these channels, which together allow organizations to send messages to stakeholders that are more personal, authentic, and direct. While speed can be an advantage, it can also be a limitation for crisis communication as negative news may travel more quickly than on traditional media. Other limitations are the possibility for unwanted crisis exposure, lack of control over stakeholder messages, limited reach to some target audiences, and lack of credibility of some information on social media. This chapter now turns to advice on how organizations should use social media for crisis communication.

2.8.3. Advice on how to use social media for crisis communication.

A key difference between social media and traditional media in crisis communication is that social media can be used in all three stages of such communication, which to review are pre-crisis, crisis response, and post-crisis. When covering a crisis, traditional media often only cover the crisis response stage.

Sherman (2010) expressed that the three main uses of social media in crisis communication are to: (1) monitor social posts and conversations about a company to discover stakeholders' insights, (2) anticipate possible threats, and (3) communicate with stakeholders during the crisis. The first two of these uses are embedded in the early pre-crisis stage when social media provide an opportunity for organizations to scan for warning signs in real time using different social listening tools to closely monitor online conversations and the mentioning of brands. The need to monitor social media is echoed by many researchers (e.g. Coombs (2014); Barnes & Jacobsen, 2014; Ruehl & Ingenhoff, 2015; Stuart & Shandwick, 2012). Many free and pay-to-use monitoring options are available for organizations to track discussions with their company's or brand's name, such as Google Trends or Social Mentions. However, social media monitoring, whether performed

manually or with tools, is difficult for many organizations in Vietnam and elsewhere. One main challenge is that the amount of online data is often too large to effectively manage, integrate and interpret. As Coombs (2014) noted, data available from social media channels are often incomprehensible and overwhelming, and contain much unneeded information. This state of social media information poses a need for crisis managers to skillfully interpret information and integrate it into meaningful monitoring reports.

Not only can social media channels assist with monitoring and crisis recognition during the pre-crisis stage, they can also provide channels for immediate action. Once a potential issue emerges, an organization can acknowledge it and explain to the wider online community that the issue will be fixed. At the same time, an organization can privately message those people who first mentioned the issue online and assure them that their input has been recognized (Sherman, 2010). As mentioned earlier, some researchers advise that organizations set up a dark web site that contains crisis information that can be activated if a crisis occurs. Also, as mentioned earlier, to help manage a crisis when the time comes, researchers recommend that organizations set up a presence in the social media channels that their stakeholders use so that stakeholders will know where to look for and post information in the event of a crisis. Organizations are advised to communicate often on all channels used.

Two other uses of social media for an organization during pre-crisis are determining who the key stakeholders are (Benoit, 1997) and prioritizing issues for proactive communication (Jaques, 2014). Since social media channels empower anyone to make a widespread and impactful crisis (Ly-Le, 2014), research on social media messages can help to determine who is shaping public opinion or drawing attention to topics. In regard to issue prioritization, this practice guides an organization to clearly define emerging issues and better prepare for them (Jaques, 2014).

Sherman's (2010) third use of social media, which is responding to stakeholders, is organizations' main application of social media during crisis communication. Many companies use social media in addition to traditional press releases to reach their stakeholders (Kerkhof, Schultz, & Utz, 2011b) and may choose to contact these stakeholders individually. Social media therefore provide additional channels for reaching and communicating with stakeholders.

In addition to the three uses proposed by Sherman (2010), another use is to evaluate crisis communication impact during the last stage, post-crisis. During this stage, social media allow organizations to stay in touch with interested stakeholders. As information lingers online long after the end of a crisis, social media provide an opportunity for an organization to revisit stakeholders' responses and their opinions on crisis communication efforts (Coombs, 2014). Social media can be used to answer questions, update stakeholders with an organization's improvements and future

plans, and monitor for follow-up queries (Coombs, 2014). The crisis-related social media channels should remain active until interest fades.

Despite the advice from many researchers that social media can be used to engage in dialogue with stakeholders during a crisis, some researchers (Kent, 2010; Kent & Taylor, 2018), believe that the current design of these channels does not support the environment required for true dialogue. For example, online dialogue between two parties in conflict requires a tool in which an organizational crisis communicator and a stakeholder can hold a private meeting where outside interference from other internet sites is blocked. The tool could have similarities to Skype in that it would be multi-modal, allowing the parties to see and hear one another.

2.8.4. Actual use of social media by organizations for crisis communication.

Several studies have found that organizations do not use social media for crisis communication as recommended. For example, Jaques (2014) found that organizations often neglect monitoring activities and are thus caught unaware by crises. For example, in the U.S., a 2011 survey revealed that although 82 percent of major companies were actively striving to manage their reputation, only 34 percent engaged in online monitoring and only 10 percent participated in any social media channels (Burke, 2011). In many other countries, including Vietnam, monitoring for and anticipating crises on social media is often neglected (Ulmer et al., 2015; Nguyen, 2014).

Not only do many organizations neglect to monitor social media, they also do not know how to respond to crises on these channels. For example, Roshan, Warren and Carr (2016) collected and reviewed more than 15,000 social media messages about crises from 17 large Australian organizations. The findings suggested that most Australian organizations lacked awareness of how to use social media for this purpose as they either did not respond to stakeholders' messages or provided selective responses that could increase reputational threat. The study concluded that Australian organizations have little understanding of social media and its appropriate use in crisis communication (Roshan et al., 2016).

Kent (2010) found that many organizations use social media simply as another web presence for marketing objectives, and do not engage in any social networking or conversations with their stakeholders on these channels including crisis communication. In another study, Kent and Taylor (2018) found that many organizations may attempt to respond to stakeholders, but only publicly, and do not want a genuine interaction of one-to-one dialogue. In the author's experience, many Vietnamese organizations tend to follow these approaches, using social media as an additional promotion tool, not a channel for dialogic conversations.

Some organizations, however, do communicate about their crises on social media. For example, the author notes that in Vietnam, many automobile and computer companies provide

information about crises through social media. For example, Toyota has included information about the Takata airbag recall on its Facebook page and on a web page that was designed specifically for stakeholders to check whether their car is affected and learn about the issue. On the national Facebook page, a representative of the company personally and politely responds to all stakeholder comments and invites people to call the company for personal conversations about their issues. Negative comments are left untouched to show that the company is honest, aiming to be transparent, and wanting to fix the problems. Individual local Toyota dealerships have also shared the national recall post to spread the information widely and reach as many stakeholders as possible.

In summary, public relations scholars state that social media channels are useful in crisis communication as they can cover all three stages of a crisis. These channels provide organizations not only with tools to monitor and communicate information but also with ways to evaluate and proactively plan for potential future crises. However, many organizations are not yet using social media in any stage of crisis communication.

2.9. Stakeholders Use Social Media in All Three Stages of a Crisis

This literature review now turns from organizations' use of social media to stakeholders' use of these channels in crisis communication. According to Ruehl and Ingenhoff (2015), stakeholders find social media to be ideal channels for communicating with organizations. With social media, stakeholders now have greater opportunity than ever before to put their evaluations, critiques, questions or concerns about a brand, service or company online, in front of a bigger audience. Ruehl and Ingenhoff (2015) conducted in-depth interviews with 65 organizational stakeholders in Switzerland to find out their motives and usage of corporates' social media. They found that social media can amplify stakeholders' voices, making them more detectable and approachable by many publics, and essentially, by any involved organizations (Ruehl & Ingenhoff, 2015).

Similar to the use of social media by organizations, the use of social media by stakeholders encompasses all three stages of a crisis. During pre-crisis, the interactive and instantaneous characteristics of social media provide stakeholders with channels through which to raise their voices. As two-way communication channels, social media allow organizations to reach out to their stakeholders while at the same time providing stakeholders an opportunity to approach organizations with compliments, critiques or questions about products, services or business actions (Ruehl & Ingenhoff, 2015). Therefore, individuals seek social media during crisis times to voice their concerns, ask questions, convey thoughts and contribute to the information-sharing process.

More importantly, mainstream journalists are also among the stakeholders who seek and share information on social media channels. As social media use has risen, journalists have begun turning to these channels for news generation (Sutton et al., 2007). If an online story gathers an

interest wave with fueled discussions, affiliations and amplifications, a journalist is much more likely to pick it up, find and report it with new angles, and eventually contribute to the crisis development (Vasterman, 2005). At such a point, a crisis has already gone beyond the scope of an online rumor, while the cross-media dynamics from social media to traditional media have reinforced the credibility of such information and intensified the impact on an organization. In a case study on how social media affects the traditional media news flow during organizational crisis in Vietnam, the author (Ly-Le, 2015b) learned that the rise of interest in social media led to traditional media coverage on the same crisis topic, and as long as the interest was still peaking on social media, traditional media tried to find different angles to cover the story. Additionally, Vietnamese mainstream journalists used online discussions and primary interviews with social media users who had posted about the topic as sources for the articles, further highlighting the importance of a story when it crossed from social media to traditional media (Ly-Le, 2015b).

Austin and colleagues (2012) tested different socially-mediated crises with 162 U.S. college students online and interviewed 22 other college students to understand the factors that affect social media use during crises. According to these researchers (2012), during the crisis stage, the main reason stakeholders use social media is to seek information from insiders and their friends and families. Much research indicates that individuals turn to social media because these channels present crisis information instantly, in an unfiltered and comprehensive form (Procopio & Procopio, 2007; Taylor & Kent, 2007). In contrast, many voices are often filtered out in traditional media because such channels typically prefer news sources to be authorities, official spokespeople or experts, and average people are less likely to be interviewed and quoted (McQuail, 2010). In social media, however, even though an ordinary person has a weak presence or little connection both online and offline, if his or her information is relevant, social media allow for a story to be heard and shared, almost instantly, by online communities. During crisis times, people try to find more and more information, and to find it quickly (Austin et al., 2012); information found on social media channels can meet this very need. While the credibility of social media news is controversial, some research asserts that users believe social media information is more up-to-date, unique and reliable than traditional media coverage (Austin et al., 2012; Procopio & Procopio, 2007; Sutton et al., 2007). Further, besides providing raw information, social media yield more emotionally affecting and victim-supporting angles to stories (Austin et al., 2012). As opposed to traditional media channels, which try to maintain objectivity over a story, social media communities can check in with victims' families and friends, and add their concerns and thoughts as well as emotional support, to the involved individuals. As such, social media channels go beyond the scope of

information sharing to meet a larger need of the stakeholders, which is socialization and emotional support (Austin et al., 2012).

During the post-crisis stage, when traditional media have lost interest in an issue, stakeholders again depend on social media for follow-up information. According to Coombs (2014), when a crisis has ended, stakeholders still have an opportunity to give feedback on the crisis management efforts, express their opinions on what an organization should do in the future, and find more information on what an organization plans for the next step. Since the online information remains, the stakeholders can sustain the conversations on social media channels as long as there is further interest in the story.

Nevertheless, research on the issue of crisis communication often centers on an organization's use of social media and neglects stakeholders' perspectives on an organization's response efforts (Coombs & Holladay, 2014). Since the stakeholders and general public dominate social media, how they contribute to the development of a crisis, as well as how they react to a company's crisis responses, should also be considered when studying crisis communication. By examining the existing literature, the author sees that while it is generally agreed that stakeholders turn to social media during crises, what they actually look for in an organization's crisis message and how they perceive the use of social media in crisis communication leaves room for further research. Therefore, this present study investigates Vietnamese stakeholders' perceptions and expectations of a crisis response, and compares stakeholders' expectations to companies' efforts, to evaluate the effectiveness of Vietnamese crisis communication.

2.10. Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter support the use of social media for crisis communication from both organizational and stakeholder sides. In Vietnam, although the reviewed research presented that social media channels are popular and Vietnamese organizations pay much attention to reputation management, little research has explored the use of these channels in crisis communication in the country. Therefore, this dissertation aims to study this social media use from two perspectives, which are those of organizations and stakeholders. The next chapter will examine the theories that will be applied to this study to propose hypotheses, which are Rogers' DOI, Hofstede's power distance and uncertainty avoidance, and NCCT.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Underpinnings

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the theoretical perspectives through which crisis communication on social media in Vietnam will be studied. The chapter first explains Rogers' diffusion of innovations (DOI) theory and Hofstede's dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance, which the dissertation will use to examine organizational adoption of social media for crisis communication. The chapter then explains networked crisis communication theory (NCCT), which the dissertation will use to examine stakeholder expectations of organizational crisis communication on social media.

3.1. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations

DOI was proposed by Rogers in the 1960s and has been updated frequently until the current 2003 version. The theory explains how an innovation is diffused or communicated through different channels over time within a social system before being adopted (Rogers, 2003). In this theory, diffusion is a special case of communication in which a new idea or practice is considered. Some examples of innovations are phones, radios, cordless phones, which were introduced and then began diffusing before they were widely accepted. The newness of an idea or practice introduces an extent of uncertainty among the members of the social system, triggers the evaluation, adoption or rejection of such newness, and eventually leads to a social change, an alteration in structure and function of the social system (Rogers, 2003).

3.1.1. The innovation-diffusion process.

The innovation-diffusion process describes the sequence of events through which an individual, organization, or decision unit goes from first acknowledging an innovation to a decision to adopt or reject it to confirmation of the decision (Rogers, 2003). There are five stages in the process, as illustrated in figure 2. The stages in this innovation-decision process have been reviewed and revised several times since DOI was first introduced. The current five sequential stages described by Rogers (2003) are as follows:

1. **Knowledge:** This stage commences when an individual (or decision unit) first learns about the existence of an innovation and gains an understanding about what it is, how it works and why it works.
2. **Persuasion:** This stage begins when thoughts about an innovation change from cognitive to affective. The stage occurs as an individual develops a favorable or unfavorable attitude about the innovation.
3. **Decision:** This stage takes place when an individual considers the advantages and disadvantages of an innovation to decide whether to adopt it. Individuals make one of two main decisions: adoption (decision to make full use of an innovation) and rejection

(nonadoption). The persuasion and decision stages can occur in reverse order, depending on the social system.

4. Implementation: This stage was added to DOI in 2003. It happens when an individual temporarily begins trying an innovation to further evaluate its effectiveness. Even when a decision to adopt is in place, a person needs more information regarding where to receive the innovation, how to use it, what problems are likely to occur when using it, and how to solve any problems with it.
5. Confirmation: At this stage, an individual seeks to reinforce his or her earlier decision by avoiding or reducing any dissonance about the innovation. If there are ongoing conflicting messages about the innovation, the decision may be reversed to discontinue the adoption.

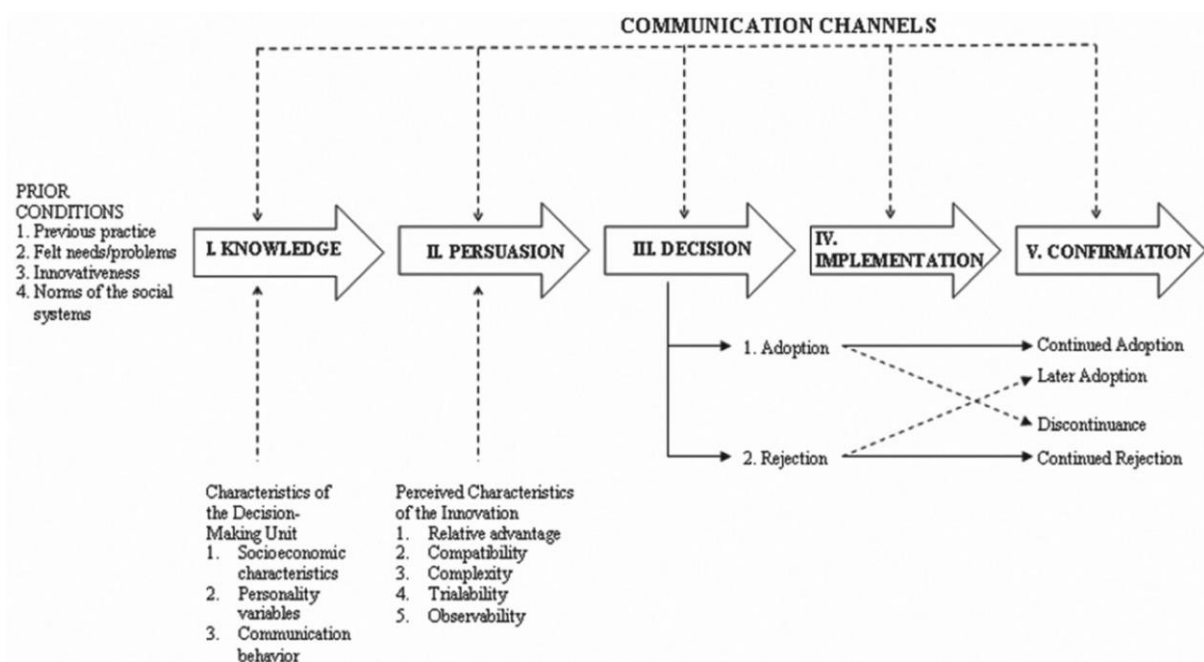


Figure 2. Innovation – Decision process.

Adapted from *Diffusion of innovations*, by E. Rogers, 2003, New York: Free Press.

As shown in figure 2, antecedent conditions to starting the adoption process are previous practice with the innovation, felt needs or problems with which the innovation could help, a culture or personal attitude that is positive towards innovation, and norms of the social system that allow for the adoption of the innovation.

Step 1, knowledge of an innovation, develops when a person or group becomes aware of an innovation and begins to understand how it works. Rogers (2003) considered whether individuals gain awareness of an innovation through *selective exposure* or *selective perception*. Selective exposure occurs when people attend only to messages that correspond to their existing beliefs and

attitudes, whereas selective perception occurs when people notice an innovation both because it corresponds to their existing beliefs and attitudes and it corresponds to their needs. As stated, in this current study, the innovation is news sharing activity by organizations about crises via social media channels in Vietnam. It is likely that Vietnamese organizations have developed knowledge of social media for crisis communication through selective perception as they would have seen potential crisis messages coming online from the public and wondered whether they could or should respond to the messages online.

The very development of social media has created a need for organizations to evaluate the use of these channels for crisis communication. Rogers listed three types of knowledge that decision makers would need to have before adopting an innovation, which are *awareness-knowledge*, *how-to knowledge*, and *principles-knowledge*. As Rogers stated, awareness-knowledge may encourage people to look for the other two types of knowledge. How-to knowledge refers to information needed to apply an innovation. For complex innovations such as the use of social media for crisis communication, the extent of information needed is much more than for simpler innovations. According to Rogers (2003), “when an adequate level of how-to knowledge is not obtained prior to the trial and adoption of an innovation, rejection and discontinuance are likely to result” (p. 173). Therefore, before adopting social media for crisis communication in Vietnam, organizations would likely need to do considerable research about how to use it. Principles-knowledge refers to information regarding underlying principles about how the innovation works. According to Rogers (2003), “It is usually possible to adopt an innovation without principles-knowledge, but the danger of misusing a new idea is greater and discontinuance may result” (p. 173). Principles-knowledge of crisis communication and social media are both still developing, and therefore, it is likely that decision makers would only slowly approach social media use for crisis response.

According to Rogers, people who have earlier knowledge of an innovation tend to be better educated, have higher social status, expose themselves to more channels of mass media, have more interpersonal channels, have greater connections to change agents, have more social participation, and are more sophisticated than those with later knowledge. However, just because they have early knowledge does not mean that they will be earlier in adopting an innovation. To adopt an innovation, people need to perceive that the innovation will help with their situation and that it fits within their attitudes and beliefs.

In step 2 of the innovation-decision process, the persuasion stage, people form a positive or negative attitude regarding the innovation. They evaluate it based upon perceptions of the innovation’s “(1) relative advantage, (2) compatibility, (3) complexity, (4) trialability, and (5) observability” (Rogers, 2003, p. 223). Relative advantage is the perceived advantage of an

innovation compared to previous ideas. It is a comparison between the expected economic and convenience benefits, and the costs of adoption. Relative advantage is perceptual and is subject to the adopter's viewpoint. In this study, relative advantage refers to the perceived benefits of using social media in crisis communication in Vietnam compared to sticking solely to traditional media channels.

Compatibility is how an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the current norms, values and experiences of users. In this study, compatibility represents whether the use of social media in crisis communication is congruent with the values and norms of Vietnamese organizations, and whether using social media requires significant change or could be incorporated into organizations' current practices. Hofstede's dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance will be used to evaluate the compatibility of using social media for crisis communication in Vietnamese organizations.

Complexity denotes how perceivably difficult or easy an innovation is to understand and use. The more complex an innovation, the less likely it is to be adopted in the short term, although it may be adopted over time. Trialability is the possibility that an innovation can be divided into smaller parts to test its effectiveness before full adoption. Observability is the extent to which the results of an innovation are easily communicated and observed.

In step 3 of the innovation-decision process, potential adopters decide whether to adopt or reject the innovation. Rogers (2003) noted that people typically try out an innovation to test its usefulness prior to adoption, and most of those who try an innovation will adopt it if it has a "certain degree of relative advantage" (p. 177). If people decide to reject an innovation, they may make an "active rejection," which consists of actively evaluating the innovation then deciding against adoption, or they may make a "passive rejection," which consists of not actually evaluating the innovation. For the innovation of using social media as a crisis communication channel, organizations may decide to adopt it for only some types of crises or businesses, or some aspects of the crisis communication process.

In step 4 of the innovation-decision process, which is implementation, people begin using the innovation. Rogers (2003) said that at this stage, users typically seek information about how to use the innovation and find problems with using it. It is possible that, depending upon the nature of the innovation, the implementation stage may take a long time, and that the innovation may be re-invented as people begin to use it. In the case of social media for crisis communication, crisis messages delivered on social media may need to be different from those typically sent in traditional media. Therefore, practices of crisis communication may evolve or be re-invented given the new channel of social media. Rogers presented eight reasons why an innovation might be re-invented

after adoption: (1) when an innovation is more complex, it more likely to be re-invented as a simplification of the original innovation; (2) when users lack knowledge of an innovation they are likely to use it in unexpected ways; (3) when innovations are general tools or concepts that have multiple possible uses, such as social media, they have a likelier possibility to be re-invented because they offer flexibility; (4) when innovations are implemented to solve many types of user problems they are likely to be re-invented; (5) when local people take pride in an innovation they may superficially re-invent it to reflect the identity of their group; (6) when change influencers encourage re-invention, a group may follow the influencers' advice; (7) when an innovation needs to fit the structure of an organization it may be changed; and (8) when later adopters implement an innovation they may re-invent it to bring in experiences of earlier adopters. Any of these types of re-invention may happen if social media is adopted for crisis communication in Vietnamese organizations.

Finally, in step 5 of the innovation-decision process, which is confirmation, people look to reinforce the decision they made, and may change their minds about it if they receive messages against it.

This present study focuses on the second and third stages of DOI, persuasion and decision, to understand which characteristics of social media are evaluated by Vietnamese organizations, and which contribute to the decision to adopt or reject social media in crisis communication. As discussed, the main purpose of the second stage is to answer the question "What are the innovation's advantages and disadvantages in the current scene?" Accordingly, this study will consider what organizations think to be the advantages and disadvantages of social media in crisis communication compared to traditional media.

3.1.2. Characteristics of adopters.

Rogers (2003) asserted that not everyone will immediately accept an innovation despite its benefits. As an innovation diffuses over time, different people consider and accept it at different rates. Accordingly, Rogers divided people into five categories.

The first category of adopters is innovators. These people are venturesome. They are eager to try new ideas, even if the ideas take them away from their peers. They have a high tolerance of uncertainty and are willing to accept failure if an adopted innovation is unsuccessful (Rogers, 2003). The innovators are the first 2.5% of a community to adopt an innovation.

Early adopters are the second category. These are respectable people who pay close attention to the innovators, look out for advantages and find uses for new ideas, and communicate with others about the ideas (Rogers, 2003). Early adopters possess a high degree of opinion

leadership within their social system and are able to ignite the diffusion so an innovation can be noticed, spread and adopted (Wedlock, 2014).

The next categories are the deliberate early majority and the skeptical late majority in a social system. These people are opinion seekers who listen to the opinion leaders, and then wait for recommendations and endorsement before adopting or rejecting an innovation (Rogers, 2003).

Finally, the laggards are the last group of people to adopt an innovation. Laggards have traditional values and are most skeptical of innovations. They only do what others have already done and want to know that an innovation is here to stay before they adopt it (Rogers, 2003).

3.1.3. Innovation in organizations.

According to Rogers (2003), “the innovation process in organizations is much more complex” than it is for individuals (p. 402), and most of the time, individuals within an organization cannot adopt an innovation until the organization has authorized its use. Rogers described three types of decisions that organizations make regarding innovation adoption, which are optional, collective and authority decisions. Optional decisions are choices made by individuals independently of the organization. In the case of social media use for crisis communication, an individual may make an optional decision within an organization to monitor social media for crises. Next, collective decisions are choices made together by the majority of a social system through, for example, voting. When a collective decision is made to adopt an innovation, all persons within the system must use it. Finally, authority decisions refer to choices made by a few individuals or even a single person such as a CEO in the superordinate position of the system who have “power, social status or technical expertise” (Rogers, 2003, p. 403). Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) assessed that in an authority decision, an adoption unit, or an individual who actually adopts and uses an innovation, cannot personally make a deliberate decision to adopt or reject. Instead, such a decision is made by a separate decision unit that has higher authority than the adoption unit and can force the adoption or rejection onto the adoption unit. As reflected in many studies of social media adoption for marketing and public relations (e.g., Wedlock, 2014; Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012; Abuhashesh, 2014; including both primary and secondary research in different countries in Europe and Australasia), authority innovation-decisions happen often in organizations. In these studies, a senior manager was always mentioned in the adoption decision of social media.

As described by Rogers (2003), there are three organizational aspects that affect an authority innovation-decision, which are large size, presence of a charismatic individual or champion who supports an innovation and can provoke an organization to adoption, and organizational structure. Regarding large size, Rogers believed that:

[It] is probably a surrogate measure of several dimensions that lead to innovation, [including] total resources, slack resources (defined as the degree to which an organization has more resources than those required for its ongoing operations), employees' technical expertise, organizational structure, and so on. (p. 411)

Next, an innovation champion may be a CEO or top manager in an organization, a middle manager, or someone with good people skills who is able to influence and negotiate. A high-level manager is typically helpful for the adoption of innovations that are "costly, highly visible, or radical" (Rogers, 2003, p. 414) whereas lower level people are helpful for implementing innovations that are less extreme.

According to Rogers (2003), characteristics of organizational structure that are related to innovativeness are degree of (1) centralization, (2) complexity, (3) formalization, (4) interconnectedness, (5) organizational slack, and (6) size, as previously considered. First, centralization refers to "the degree to which power and control... are concentrated in the hands of a relatively few individuals" in an organization (p. 412). The greater the concentration of power and control, the less innovative an organization tends to be because the variety of new ideas is reduced and the few top leaders are typically unable to see operational problems that are lower down in their organization. On the other hand, once an organization decides to adopt an innovation, centralization may make it easier for the innovation to be implemented.

Next, complexity refers to the degree of knowledge and skill as well as number of different professions and formal qualifications that an organization's members have. Although organizations with more complexity tend to encourage their employees to adopt innovations, complexity itself can make it hard for members to achieve consensus regarding an adoption.

The third organizational influence on adoption, formalization or bureaucratization, refers to "the degree to which an organization emphasizes its members' following rules and procedures" (p. 412). Like centralization, high formalization can hinder innovation, but once an innovation decision is made, it can make implementation easier.

The fourth organizational influence on adoption, interconnectedness, refers to the degree to which members of the organization are interconnected. The greater the interconnection, the greater the ease with which an idea can flow and the more innovative an organization is likely to be.

Finally, organizational slack, or uncommitted resources, allows organizations to afford innovations, especially those at higher costs. It may be that large organizations tend to be more innovative because they have more resources available. While most of these characteristics differ among organizations and their members, the impacts of centralization and formalization are conditioned by an organization's culture.

As an example of previous crisis communication research that used DOI, Taylor and Perry (2005) studied organizational adoption of new media for crisis communication over five 30-day periods from 1998 to 2003 (October 1998, October 1999, April 2000, April 2003, and October 2003). These researchers began by collecting a list of organizational crises mentioned in CNN.com and MSNBC.com and then examining the home pages of these organizations to see if any crisis response was present. Their goal was to discover whether the organizations were using the Internet to respond, what tactics they were using, whether use of new media for crisis response was increasing, whether use of new media tactics for crisis response was increasing, and whether technology companies had higher rates of new media adoption for crisis response than non-technology companies. In all, the researchers found that of the 92 organizations who had crisis stories on CNN.com and MSNBC.com over the five periods of study, only 50 (54%) used new media for their response, and that overall, the adoption rate did not increase over time. Adoption was highest in October 1999 at 88% but was only 24% in October 2003. The researchers also coded the responses as using either traditional tactics, which were one-way communication tactics such as press releases that were adopted for the Internet, or “innovative media tactics” (p. 212). The innovative tactics were further coded as: (1) “dialogic communication” or encouragement for visitors to respond to the issue on the web site, (2) “connecting links”, which organizations provided to give journalists access to other information sources on the Internet, (3) “real-time monitoring,” which gave hour-by-hour updates on the crisis, (4) “multi-media effects”, which offered various audio and video information, and (5) “online chat”, which allowed stakeholders to directly involve themselves in the situation. Among the adopting organizations, 98% used traditional tactics. Although the adoption rate did not increase, the researchers did find that organizations appeared to be using different types of new media tactics over time. In the October 1998 period, only 42% of the located organizations used innovative tactics, but by the October 2003 period, all the located organizations had used at least one innovative tactic. Across the entire study, 22 organizations set up two-way communication in their web pages while only one set up a tool for an online chat. A further finding was that high-tech firms and other types of organizations did not differ in their use of new media for crisis communication.

Some notable discussion points from Taylor and Perry (2005) regarding the study concerned adoption of traditional crisis tactics for the Internet, adoption of two-way communication on the Internet, and best practices for using new media in crisis response. Firstly, the researchers thought that staying with traditional crisis tactics on the Internet allowed organizations to “frame and define” a crisis for the media on a frequent basis, which allowed for consistent updating (p. 214). Traditional tactics also gave organizations control over their messages. Next, the researchers

thought that two-way communication mechanisms on the Internet would allow organizations to gain greater insight into how members of the public were responding to a crisis and addressing their concerns. The organization could then use the information to respond directly to the person who voiced the concern or to prepare something for all users of the organization's web page. Next, the researchers evaluated how three organizations used the Internet for specific types of crises during the study. They considered that the Internet was useful for communicating with the public about lawsuits as in the case of Microsoft's 1999 anti-trust trial, about keeping the public updated about natural disasters, and was useful for recalls of defective products. Overall, the researchers found that adoption of the Internet for crisis communication across the five periods of the study was "not linear" and that "complex factors influence[d] the decision to adopt" (p. 215). The researchers considered that use of new media for crisis responses might very much depend upon the type of crisis that an organization was experiencing, and that organizations had "yet to see the value of the Internet in crisis communication" (p. 215). These findings indicate that DOI is a useful theory for observing nuances of the adoption of a technology.

According to Rogers (2003), the DOI model has made many contributions to many disciplines in the past decades. The theory has contributed to research in social psychology, communication, marketing, public health, and so on. Its multidisciplinary nature provides useful ways to understand social changes in various fields. Besides contributing to academic research, DOI also offers pragmatic solutions for individuals and organizations who seek to utilize academic research findings in solving social problems. As innovation happens frequently, the model has achieved prominent attention and application from both research institutes and businesses.

Despite the numerous contributions DOI provides, Rogers (2003) acknowledged certain biases and shortcomings of it. A first criticism is the pro-innovation bias of the theory, which is the connotation that innovations should be diffused and adopted, rather than be re-invented or rejected by the social system. Another bias of the model is the individual-blame bias, which is the tendency to look at channels of diffusion individually. Additionally, a major shortcoming is the psychological recall problem in DOI research. While time is an important factor in this theory, respondents often have trouble remembering the exact time of adoption, which may lead to inaccurate data. Another considerable criticism is the issue of inequality in adoption, as socioeconomic inequality tends to increase as a result of new idea diffusion. This study now turns to discuss Vietnamese culture to see how it may affect social media adoption for crisis communication in an organization.

3.2. Social Media Use in a Cultural Context

As organizations are bound by national cultures, the values within them are similar to those within the national society (Hofstede, 2001). Further, communication scholars (e.g., Grunig, 1992;

Sriramesh, 2004) found that culture is one of the most significant influences on public relations practice. The national culture is also stressed in the Vietnamese public relations industry. Domm (2015) conducted research on the public relations role in the six most developed economies in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which includes Vietnam. He surveyed 100 public relations practitioners in the region and interviewed 14 practitioners to identify the key criteria that influence public relations practice in Southeast Asia. His study concluded that American and European public relations practices are relevant to use in decision-making about appropriate practice in ASEAN. However, local culture also plays an essential part. In Vietnam, the author believes that a good understanding of Western public relations and Vietnamese culture are needed to be a public relations professional.

Therefore, in addition to DOI, this study employs two of Hofstede's cultural dimensions to explain how culture influences the decision to adopt social media for crisis communication in a Vietnamese organization. The cultural dimensions originated from Hofstede's (1980) analysis of IBM company opinion surveys completed by 116,000 employees across more than 70 nations from 1967-1973. Over time, the dimensions have had occasional additions. Hofstede's original research is considered a landmark study, providing a foundation for many subsequent cross-cultural studies, including public relations and communication research (Domm, 2015). There are currently six cultural dimensions in Hofstede's study, which are: (1) power distance, (2) individualism – collectivism, (3) masculinity – femininity, (4) uncertainty avoidance, (5) long-term orientation – short-term orientation, and (6) indulgence – restraint. Each dimension has a scaled index along which each nation's culture is measured. The first four dimensions were developed as part of Hofstede's original study. In contrast, long-term orientation was developed from research by members of The Chinese Culture Connection (1987) who sought to test Hofstede's dimensions against a survey of Chinese values. The last dimension, indulgence – restraint, was added in 2010 using research from the Bulgarian linguist, Michael Minkov, who is a researcher in the World Values Survey (Hofstede, 2011). In brief, power distance, which ranges from high to low, refers to how individuals are considered equal or unequal within a society. Individualism – collectivism is the degree of interdependence among members of society. Masculinity – femininity deals with how a culture prefers the masculine values of "achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success" in contrast to the feminine values of "cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life" ("National culture," 2018). Uncertainty avoidance focuses on how comfortable members of society generally are with ambiguity and uncertainty. The dimension of long-term orientation – short-term orientation describes a society's preference to stick with traditions and believe that the most important things occurred in the past or in the present moment,

versus perceiving the world as continually changing and needing to prepare for that change. According to Hofstede (2011), countries in East Asia followed by those in Eastern and Central Europe are long-term oriented, whereas the USA, Australia, and Latin American, African and Muslim countries are short-term oriented. Lastly, the indulgence dimension assesses how members of a society prefer to act on their impulses and be free versus keeping themselves restrained and bound to obligations. The measure for a culture on each of these dimensions reflects the average response (Williamson, 2002). Therefore, an individual within a culture may provide responses that differ from those reported by Hofstede for his or her culture.

The two cultural dimensions discussed in this research are power distance (PD), or the extent to which a society expects and accepts that power is unequally distributed, and uncertainty avoidance (UA), or the extent to which a society feels uncomfortable or threatened by ambiguity, and therefore tries to avoid uncertainty. The reason PD and UA were chosen for analysis in this research is that several aspects of PD and UA can direct decision-making in an organization. First, UA influences how management plans for a company's directions and operations, and PD represents how management executes the plan to keep the company under control. Planning and control within an organization are complementary and reflect the UA and PD norms of the dominant national culture (Hofstede, 2001). The dominant culture can further affect the role of leadership and empowerment in an organization. How social media diffuses from an opinion leader to the followers is thus subjected to the UA and PD values of the country. Beyond management influence, PD and UA also motivate employees. Motivation refers to how employees seek achievement and recognition, and whether they actively push themselves to search for different solutions or wait for the management to tell them what to do (Hofstede, 2001). Together, PD and UA show strong evidence that culture can direct an organization's functioning (Hofstede, 2001), and in this current research, they will be used to describe the social media diffusion trend. The author will consider how these dimensions affect an organization's choice to adopt or reject social media for crisis communication. These dimensions are now discussed in greater depth in the following sections.

3.2.1. Power distance.

Hofstede (2001) defined power distance (PD) as follows:

The power distance between a boss B and a subordinate S in a hierarchy is the difference between the extent to which B can determine the behavior of S and the extent to which S can determine the behavior of B... The power distance, thus defined, that is accepted by both B and S and supported by their social environment is to be determined by their national culture. (p. 83)

In his research, the PD index was computed using responses to the following three questions:

- How willing are employees to disagree with their managers?
- How do employees describe their managers' decision-making style: autocratic, persuasive, consultative or democratic?
- What decision-making style do employees prefer their manager to have: autocratic, persuasive, consultative or democratic?

According to House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman and Gupta (2004), the first question was used to study how stratified power is in a country, and whether subordinates think it may be dangerous to question a manager's decision. The second question aimed to understand employees' subjective descriptions of a manager's decision-making process. Lastly, the third question aimed to understand how employees think decisions should be made. Hofstede (1980) noted that employees in countries with a high PD index typically show greater conformity and less independence. Employees in such countries prefer to follow a manager closely, or prefer the other extreme, hoping to be more independent and for a manager to have a democratic decision-making style. In contrast, employees in countries with low PD typically show more independence, equal rights and dislike toward control and hierarchy.

The country PD is often mirrored by organizations so that the organizations can gain legitimacy and work well with other businesses in the country (House et al., 2004). In the current Hofstede Centre report "What about Vietnam" (n.d.), Vietnam scores high on the PD index at 70 points. Therefore, in a Vietnamese organization, employees are likely to accept a hierarchical order, expect inherent inequalities and understand that they should act appropriately towards their managers. To put this number in perspective, the scale runs from 0 to 100, with a score under 50 considered to be low and above 50 to be high ("Dimensions," n.d.). Hofstede (2001) listed some key characteristics of decision-making in high PD organizations such as those in Vietnam. According to him, the decision structure is centralized, concentrated on the authority. Managers generally rely on formal rules and see themselves as benevolent decision makers. Employees generally expect to be told what to do and are influenced by the authority. Lastly, innovations, to be adopted, must have strong support from the hierarchy.

From the above findings, in this dissertation, it is hypothesized that in Vietnamese organizations, the managers are the ones who make the final decisions regarding innovating. If the managers decide to adopt social media in crisis communication, the public relations team and the rest of the employees will accept these new channels without questioning. The decision to adopt social media in Vietnamese organizations is likely to be an authority decision.

3.2.2. Uncertainty avoidance.

Uncertainty avoidance (UA) is the degree to which uncertainty is tolerated in society, to which members within a society feel threatened by ambiguity, and to which existing rules and orders are favored (Hofstede, 2001). The UA index was developed from Hofstede's (1980) aforementioned research. The index was calculated using responses to the following three questions:

- Do employees believe that rules should not be broken in any situation?
- How long do participating employees intend to stay in employment with their current company?
- How often do participating employees feel nervous at work?

The measurements were chosen to understand employees' rule-orientation and preference for stability. The longer an employee intends to stay in one company and the more often he or she is stressed at work, the higher the UA index (Hofstede, 1980). The UA presented in an organizational setting contributes directly to the overall UA of the society, and in turn, the UA norm of the society influences how employees react to uncertainties at work (House et al., 2004).

According to House et al. (2004), in organizations, employees may express different levels of uncertainty towards the adoption of new technology, rules and processes within organizations. Regarding new technology, House et al. proposed that at managerial levels, uncertainties relate to the implementation support and prospective outcomes of the technology. If the outcome is doubtful, managers may be reluctant to accept it. At the lower organizational levels, uncertainties are associated more with the practical application of a new technology, whether employees would find it easy to master and perceive it as being helpful for performing their work. If the perceived ease of use and helpfulness are questionable, there may be barriers for the employees to adopt it. As a result, to cope with or avoid such uncertainties, organizations typically impose standard plans, formalized procedures and traditions (Hofstede, 2001).

In the Hofstede Centre report, Vietnam scores relatively low on the UA index at 30 points ("What about Vietnam," n.d.). As listed by Hofstede (2001), key attitudes toward an innovation in a low UA country like Vietnam listed are:

- The society is comfortable with ambiguity and open to change and innovation.
- The society is interested in novelty and convenience.
- Organizations welcome innovations but do not necessarily take innovations seriously.

Based upon the above, it can be inferred that in general, Vietnamese people are relaxed about uncertainty, do not see innovations as threatening and are tolerant of trying new things.

Together with the PD index, the UA index in Vietnam suggests that if an organization's opinion leaders perceive the benefits of an innovation to be strong enough, adoption is likely to happen. However, crisis communication is a practice that strongly seeks to avoid uncertainty as it aims to control how stakeholders perceive an organization. Therefore, if organizations perceive that social media channels cannot offer them enough certainty over the outcomes of their messages, they will be unlikely to adopt these channels for this purpose.

3.2.3. A critique of Hofstede's dimensions of culture.

While many researchers have applied Hofstede's dimensions to their work, Hofstede's research is not without criticism. For example, McSweeney (2002) provided a critique of Hofstede's methodology that was countered by Williamson (2002), and Ly (2013) critiqued the dimension of power distance. McSweeney (2002) criticized five assumptions underlying Hofstede's model, which are as follows: (1) that Hofstede's logic is circular, meaning that, in using IBM-employee responses from different nations, for example, Hofstede assumed his result that it is possible to differentiate national culture from organizational and occupational culture; (2) that it is possible to see differences in national culture through a sample of IBM employees; (3) that national culture would determine how individual employees would answer the survey questions; (4) that it is possible to identify national culture from Hofstede's survey; and (5) that the dimensions aim to describe the entire culture of a nation regardless of the situation in which individuals are acting (e.g., at home). Williamson (2002), however, argued that McSweeney's criticisms are mistaken because McSweeney failed to see that Hofstede's research arose from a functionalist paradigm, which takes its roots from physical sciences where issues can be "measured, evaluated, and monitored" (Burke, 2007, p. 479). Hofstede aimed to be an objective researcher who applied statistical techniques to data from large samples.

Regarding the first assumption, that Hofstede's logic is circular, Williamson (2002) said that within functionalism, it is common and accepted practice to begin a study by making hypotheses about findings, which is what Hofstede did. Therefore, Hofstede's logic was appropriate. Also, Hofstede did not need to control for differences between national, organizational, and occupational culture because it was not relevant to consider them as independent.

Regarding the second assumption, that a sample of IBM employees from each nation could be used to describe each nation's culture, it is true that Hofstede could not know how the respondents within each national IBM sample would differ from people within their home nation. However, Williamson (2002) pointed out that "if IBM selected local [non-US] staff [who were] atypically attuned to US norms, Hofstede's research would have underestimated differences

between national cultures” (p. 1381). Therefore, Hofstede’s claim of finding differences among the samples is strengthened rather than reduced.

Regarding the third assumption, that national culture would determine how individual employees would answer the survey questions, McSweeney is pointing out that other factors than culture could have determined why the employees answered the questions as they did and that countries contain many cultures so the idea of a nation having a single culture could not explain differences among the responses. As Williamson (2002) noted, however, Hofstede also analyzed the data along with other dimensions, for example, sex and age, and found that cultural differences were the most significant predictor of difference. Also, Hofstede did not claim that any nation’s culture was uniform. Within each culture, people answered individual survey questions differently. The score that Hofstede gave to each dimension within a nation was a measure of the average response, not the only response. The dimensions and scores were meant to be a “very rough indication of tendencies in the rich variety of cultural values” (Williamson, 2002, p. 1381).

Regarding the fourth assumption, that it is possible to identify national culture from Hofstede’s survey, McSweeney (2002) argued that the model is overly simplistic and uses nomothetic research, which is inappropriate for studying culture (Williamson, 2002, p. 1388). McSweeney (2002) said that the dimensions were simplistic in being bipolar whereas they might be multipolar, they may interact with one another and not be independent, they do not allow for conflicting views, they are not comprehensive, and they do not specify which dimensions are most important for a culture. Williamson (2002) pointed out that although it seems that Hofstede’s model is simplistic, it offers parsimony, which means that it is “relatively easy to explain, communicate and apply” (p. 1387), and this factor may explain much of the model’s success. Regarding Hofstede’s choice to use nomothetic research, which is about establishing general laws as in the natural sciences, Williamson (2002) argued that Hofstede did the best he could within this method, that he was aware that the survey questions might not have perfect equivalence across cultures and that he acknowledged there were compromises in whether to study a culture from the outside or the inside. Williamson said that to criticize Hofstede’s model for this method is to criticize all such theory that relies on nomothetic research.

Regarding the fifth and final assumption, that the dimensions aim to describe the entire culture of a nation regardless of the situation in which individuals are acting, McSweeney (2002) is arguing again that the sample may not have been representative, but also that the situation in which the questions were asked, which was a workplace, may make it impossible to translate the results to other situations. As noted by Williamson (2002), however, the “selection bias in IBM recruitment is more likely to have understated than overstated differences between national cultures” (p. 1388).

Therefore, the sample does not invalidate the study. Also, studies beyond Hofstede's have helped to validate the dimensions themselves as well as their application to situations beyond work. For example, Williamson (2002) noted that the dimensions of individualism – collectivism, power distance, and long-term orientation correspond with cultural dimensions in studies by Trompenaars (1993) and Schwartz (1992), and the survey used by Trompenaars included some issues that were not work-related.

In sum, Williamson (2002) believed that Hofstede's model provides useful insights into culture for social scientists working within and outside of the functionalist paradigm. He wrote:

For social scientists working within the functionalist paradigm, quantification of national culture opens up what is otherwise a black box of cultured factors. For social scientists working outside the functionalist paradigm, Hofstede has named and described attributes of national culture that may be either used to describe social phenomenon or put up as a comparative yardstick for other cultural attributes. (p. 1391)

Ly (2013, p. 57) critiqued Hofstede's dimension of power distance, particularly answers given to question 46 on the IBM employee survey, which was the central question used to calculate each country's PD score. The question is:

"How frequently, in your experience, do the following problems occur?"

"B46. Employees being afraid to express disagreement with their managers:

1. Very frequently
2. Frequently
3. Sometimes
4. Seldom
5. Very seldom"

Ly (2013) contrasted how Western and non-Western employees might answer this question. While Western employees might be afraid to disagree with their managers due to fear of being sacked or receiving the manager's disapproval, those in other cultures might choose not to disagree due to respect for the manager so that they themselves or the manager will not lose face. To define, face is "the interaction between the degree of threats or considerations one party offers to another party, and the degree of claim for a sense of self-respect... put forth by the other party in a given situation" (Ting-Toomey, 1990). Therefore, the question assumes that fear is the only reason why an employee might forgo disagreement and is thus culturally biased. Ly said that a better question would have been, "Do you express your disagreement with your manager?" and if the answer was between seldom and never, to give reasons why. She also pointed out that just because Western

employees may choose to disagree with their managers does not mean that they disrespect their managers. Disagreement and disrespect are two different issues in the West.

To conclude her critique, Ly (2013) questioned whether researchers should use the concept of power distance at all, how much it described reality, and what other factors should be considered in describing culture. She believes that despite the problems with Hofstede's methodology, power distance is still a valuable concept because "[i]t is indeed the dimension that is the most immediately visible in the work environment and that can be the most problematic in negotiation situations" because if a person does not recognize the hierarchy, he or she "could be perceived as impolite and lacking respect" (p. 64). Ly also noted that it is valuable to conduct more research on power distance and that it has explanatory power.

Despite the criticisms of power distance and uncertainty avoidance, these dimensions are useful for considering the social media adoption process for crisis communication. It may be that the higher power distance of Vietnam makes it difficult for Vietnamese organizations to engage with stakeholders on social media as such engagement might cause organizations to feel that they would be losing face. Both power distance and uncertainty avoidance will be used to reflect upon responses from public relations participants in the interviews and survey.

3.3. Social Media Use for Information Seeking and Sharing during Crises

While DOI is employed in this study to analyze social media adoption for crisis communication from the organizational perspective, the last theory looks at this adoption from the Vietnamese stakeholders' point of view. Again, the stakeholders are an organization's customers, crisis victims or their associates, as well as general audiences who care about the crisis and its outcome. Using the lens of the networked crisis communication theory (NCCT) proposed by Schultz et al. (2011; 2012), this study examines stakeholders' expectations of an organization's social media usage in the crisis information seeking and sharing process. The theory challenges the older sole focus on the message during crisis communication by showing the effects of media type on crisis communication and how people respond to the same messages distributed on different media channels. This section first discusses the original study of NCCT by Schultz et al. (2011) and then a follow-up study of it by Utz et al. (2013).

To develop NCCT, Schultz et al. (2011) conducted an experiment with 1,677 participants on their perceptions of an organization's reputation, sharing of information about a crisis, and reaction to a crisis after receiving one of three types of crisis messages that were delivered via one of three types of media: newspaper, blog, or Twitter. Those participants in the Twitter condition were also given the option to click a link that led them to a blog about the crisis. If they clicked on the link, they were therefore exposed to two types of media, which placed them in a fourth media condition

in the experiment, which was “Twitter+blog”. Participants were recruited via an online panel and were from a wide range of ages, education levels and types of employment. Most were daily internet users. The case used in the experiment was fictional and involved the car maker Mercedes Benz. It said that “there had been thousands of accidents and that ten people died because of problems with the spark plugs” (p. 23). Each participant was presented with one of three messages, which were an *apology to victims*, *sympathy*, or *information* about the crisis via one of the three media types, and was then asked to evaluate the organization’s reputation, willingness to engage in secondary crisis communication such as forwarding the message to a friend, and intention to engage in secondary crisis behavior such as boycotting or spreading negative news about the organization.

Regarding organizational reputation, the media, not the message in this experiment, affected participants’ responses. Participants who read the “Twitter+blog” messages gave the highest scores for organizational reputation. The researchers considered that this result may have occurred because participants saw the main message twice and were thus better able to process it. Participants who read the newspaper messages provided the second highest score on reputation, followed by participants who read the blogs, and finally those who read the Twitter-only messages.

Regarding willingness to engage in secondary crisis communication after reading one of the messages, participants who received newspaper messages were more likely to share them than those who received messages via the other two types of media. However, “Twitters *users* were more willing to share the message [when received through any of the three media conditions including newspapers] than blog users, who were in turn more likely to share the message than non-users of blogs and twitter” (p. 24). It may be that Twitter users are simply more accustomed to sharing information than users of other media. Considering the message, participants who received tweets were significantly less likely to share messages when they were written “in the sympathy condition than in the information and apology condition” (p. 24).

Regarding secondary crisis reactions, participants who read Twitter messages or Twitter+blog messages expressed lower desire to boycott or spread negative news about the organization than did participants who read the blog or newspaper messages. Regarding the message condition and secondary crisis reactions, those participants in the information condition gave “fewer secondary crisis reactions than [those in] the apology and sympathy condition” (pp. 24-25).

In summary, the results showed that in crisis communication, different media, which are the channels through which an organization chooses to communicate with its stakeholders, affect how stakeholders respond to messages (Schultz et al., 2011). Schultz et al. (2011) found that crisis communication on Twitter+blog led to higher post-crisis reputation, that participants were most

likely to share newspaper stories, and that communication on Twitter or Twitter+blog led to less intense crisis reactions.

In a follow-up to the Schultz et al. (2011) study described above, Utz, Schultz, and Glocka (2013) conducted an experiment using a crisis scenario of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster. As in the earlier study, the researchers aimed to examine whether medium and crisis type affect organizational reputation, secondary crisis communication, and secondary crisis reaction. In this study, they also tested “whether perceived credibility of the medium influences secondary crisis communication and whether effects of crisis type [e.g., intentional or crisis] are driven by anger” (p. 41). The experiment presented 182 participants with one of two fictional crisis responses from the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), which was the organization that maintained the power plant. One response was written as an *intentional crisis* in which the organization took responsibility for causing the crisis, and the other was written as a *victim crisis* in which the organization was presented as a victim of an uncontrollable event (e.g., an earthquake).

Regarding organizational reputation, the study found no significant difference in how participants evaluated TEPCO whether the crisis response was presented as an intentional or victim crisis. However, regardless of the response, reputation was judged to be higher by those who received it via Facebook and Twitter than those who received it through the newspaper.

Regarding secondary crisis communication (e.g., willingness to share the message), there was again no significant difference among participants whether the crisis response was presented as intentional or victim. However, participants who received the newspaper response “were more willing to share the message than participants in the Facebook condition and those in the Twitter condition” (p. 44). This result was the same as in the earlier study.

Regarding secondary crisis reaction (e.g., saying bad things about the organization), there was also no significant difference among participants whether the response was presented as intentional or victim. However, secondary crisis reaction was highest among those who received the newspaper message, followed by those who received the Twitter and the Facebook messages.

In looking at the emotional content of participants’ crisis reactions, the researchers found a difference between those who received the intentional and victim response regardless of the media through which it was received. Those who received the intentional response spoke less positively about events and “evoked more anger” than those who received the victim crisis response (p. 44). Those expressing more anger were also more likely to share the crisis response, engage in secondary crisis reactions, and negatively evaluate the organization.

Considering the results altogether, the researchers said:

The use of specific media technologies influences the effects of crisis communication, not because of the technology itself, but due to many other factors, such as interpretations and use experiences... For example, the choice of a social medium influences the effectiveness of the crisis communication, as it is now seen as a cue for the willingness of an organization to quickly inform its stakeholders and to engage in dialog with them. (p. 45)

The researchers also noted that people primarily share and discuss information from newspapers because they find the source to be more credible than social media. Therefore, they concluded that traditional media are still important for crisis communication and should be included in crisis communication strategies. The researchers recommended that organizations design “an integrated communication strategy that spreads a consistent message across different channels” (p. 45) and that they attend to stakeholder emotions, particularly anger, as anger pushes people towards more negative sharing of a crisis and reacting towards a crisis.

As mentioned earlier, reputation is one of the most important assets of an organization, influencing the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders (Podnar, 2015), especially in times of crisis. A main purpose of crisis communication is to protect the reputation of an involved organization during and after a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 1996), and the reputation in turn impacts the degree of crisis responsibility and the crisis communication efforts (Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Schultz et al., 2011). As a result, reputation is the first and foremost condition to measure crisis communication effectiveness. Considering the above NCCT studies in designing a crisis communication strategy, use of social media may be especially useful in protecting an organization’s reputation.

Comparing the influences of the communication medium and message on organizational reputation during crises, NCCT argues that in crisis communication, the choice of medium matters more than the message (Schultz et al., 2011), although the message must still be written sensitively to avoid provoking anger among stakeholders. As social media allows organizations to communicate in real-time, stakeholders are not left worried and stressed due to lack of information. Compared to communication via traditional media, crisis communication through social media channels shows that an organization commits more to its stakeholders, wants to inform them more quickly and directly, and is willing to engage in dialogue with them, thus showing the organization to be more sincere and caring (Schultz et al., 2011; Schultz et al., 2012; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007). Another advantage of social media is that organizations can communicate directly with their stakeholders, skipping the step of journalistic gatekeeping to deliver personalized messages (Schultz et al., 2012). Although traditional media channels might be more mainstream and credible, information delivered on social media projects a perceived human voice and communicates an

organization's commitment better (Schultz et al., 2011). Social media thus offers the possibility of building trust and satisfaction among stakeholders better than its traditional counterparts.

Additionally, Schultz and colleagues (2011) noted that positive post-crisis reputation is highest when two or more social media channels are used together. As discussed, in their experiment, Twitter and blogs were employed together. Altogether, Schultz et al.'s experiment demonstrated that crisis communication on social media may lead to a higher reputation of an organization than crisis communication via traditional media (Schultz et al., 2011; Utz et al., 2013). However, the second highest score for reputation was given by participants who received the newspaper condition. Therefore, using a combination of social and traditional media for crisis communication may provide the best solution for maintaining an organization's reputation during a crisis.

The second aspect considered in NCCT is secondary crisis communication, which is the stakeholders' willingness to tell their friends about a crisis, share information about it and leave comments (Schultz et al., 2011). According to NCCT, the choice of media strongly influences secondary crisis communication. As discussed, contrary to the common belief that social media allow easy information sharing with only a mouse click, secondary crisis communication occurs more in the traditional media condition of NCCT studies (Schultz et al., 2011; Utz et al., 2013). Stakeholders tend to talk mainly about the information they received through traditional media. Moreover, even though the channels they use to pass information along may be social media (i.e., retweet a piece of news or hit "share" to an article), people are more likely to share with their acquaintances a traditional media article that is posted online than a post written purely for social media (Schultz et al., 2011). Utz and colleagues (2013) explained that this tendency is because of the higher credibility of traditional media; stakeholders thus depend more on traditional media for crisis news. On the other hand, the final factor of secondary crisis communication, leaving comments, is more likely to happen on social media (Schultz et al., 2012), as social media is designed for this purpose.

The remaining aspect examined in NCCT is secondary crisis reactions, which are the acts of judging a crisis communication effort, talking badly about an organization, or boycotting an organization. The results from Schultz and colleagues' (2011) study showed that participants in the social media condition made fewer secondary crisis reactions than those in the traditional media condition. As mentioned previously in secondary crisis communication, people who receive crisis information from traditional media tend to share or speak about it more often. Moreover, these people are also more likely to talk badly or boycott an organization, compared to those who read information on social media channels (Schultz et al., 2011; Utz et al., 2013). This result indicates that sharing information and acting on that information are two different things to consider (Schultz

et al., 2011). NCCT concludes that the choice of media through which crisis messages are sent is important and should be considered when designing a crisis communication strategy.

According to Liu and Fraustino (2014), limitations of NCCT are that it has “focused on how organizations may use media to mitigate potential negative outcomes, such as boycotts, rather than generate positive, prosocial outcomes, such as taking recommended protective actions” (p. 545). Also, as Utz et al. (2013) pointed out, the theory needs more development regarding the impact of stakeholder emotion towards crisis response. Stakeholder response is not impacted by just the media or the content but by both. Utz et al. (2013) said, “Future research should address the role of different emotions such as for example empathy for the victims” (p. 45). It is also important to note that at the time the NCCT studies were conducted, social media adoption was less widespread than it is today, and therefore, the results might be different today.

This dissertation applies NCCT to explore the use of social media in crisis communication from the stakeholders’ viewpoint. The study seeks to understand whether Vietnamese stakeholders would like organizations to utilize social media in their crisis response efforts, if social media has an influence on the stakeholders’ perception of the crisis information and their reactions to the organizations’ responses, and if there is any other influence on stakeholders’ perception besides use of social media channels.

In summary, this study will use DOI’s relative advantage, compatibility and complexity attributes to explore how social media is diffused in organizations in their crisis communication efforts. The characteristics of organizational adopters, organizational aspects that affect an authority innovation-decision as well as Vietnam’s power distance and uncertainty avoidance measures will be used to explain the organization’s decision whether to use social media in their crisis communication plans. Also, NCCT’s reputation, secondary crisis communication and secondary crisis reactions aspects are used to explore what stakeholders think about organizations’ current crisis communication efforts, and if organizations should use social media for crisis communication. The results from organization and stakeholder participants will be compared to find any similarities or differences in their views, and how to overcome the differences. In the next chapter, this study presents the methodology for interviewing participants and analyzing their responses.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Now that this dissertation has reviewed literature on social media use for crisis communication and theories selected to evaluate its usefulness, this chapter moves to describe the research method followed. As will be discussed, the study took a mixed methods approach and consisted of three phases. Phase 1 consisted of interviews with Vietnamese public relations practitioners and Vietnamese stakeholders. The interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to develop hypotheses. To test the hypotheses, the interviews were followed by phase 2, which consisted of two large-scale surveys of Vietnamese practitioners and stakeholders. In phase 3, another round of interviews with Vietnamese public relations practitioners was held after the surveys to consider any contradictions between the interview and survey results and delve deeper into the organizational use of social media for crisis communication in the country. The following list presents the three phases:

- Phase 1:
 - Interview (1a): In-depth interviews (IDIs) with Vietnamese public relations. The interviews were thematically analyzed, and from the themes, hypotheses were developed for testing in Phase 2 with a large-scale survey.
 - Interview (2a): IDIs with Vietnamese stakeholders. The interviews were thematically analyzed, and from the themes, hypotheses were developed for testing in Phase 2 with a large-scale survey.
- Phase 2:
 - Survey (1b): Survey with Vietnamese public relations practitioners. This survey tested the hypotheses developed following interview (1a) with public relations practitioners.
 - Survey (2b): Survey with Vietnamese stakeholders. This survey tested the hypotheses developed following interview (1b) with stakeholders.
- Phase 3:
 - Interview (1c): IDIs with Vietnamese public relations practitioners. These interviews aimed to consider differences between practitioner and stakeholder perceptions of organizational crisis communication.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the study took a mixed methods approach. According to Jugenheimer and colleagues (2014), with a study on the public's opinion of the practice of public relations, using quantitative methods alone can only gather superficial data. Using a mixed method approach with both qualitative and quantitative methods can help the researcher embellish primary expectations, and then further explore the variety and depth of opinions, and influences behind

them. Therefore, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used for this study to overcome the limitations of each method.

The research was designed to follow a functionalist paradigm, which “looks at how things work, why and what can be done to improve them” (Weerakkody, 2015, p. 30). This paradigm presumes that social arrangements and processes serve specific purposes and work to maintain those arrangements and processes. This study therefore examines how traditional and social media are used by organizations and stakeholders for communicating internal organizational crises and whether and how such communication could be improved if organizations communicated about their crises on social media.

4.1. Phase 1: Research Design for Interviews (1a) and (2a)

The research for phase 1 targeted Vietnamese public relations practitioners (group 1) and Vietnamese organizational stakeholders and general audiences (group 2), aiming to examine the public relations practitioners’ perceptions of and intentions to use social media in organizational crisis communication strategies (RQ1), and to identify stakeholders’ expectations of social media use (by organizations) in crisis response (RQ2). Each group had its own set of questions. Phase 3 of the study also used interviews but will be discussed following phase 2 in this chapter.

In phase 1, the interviews (1a) and (2a) were personal, semi-structured interviews to develop the hypotheses for the surveys. The interview (1c), conducted after surveys (1b) and (2b) (the details of which are explained in chapters 7 and 8), was also personal and semi-structured. It was used to elicit more detail and explanations. These IDIs were conducted face-to-face or through Skype.

In phase 2, the surveys (1b) and (2b) each employed a quantitative approach with closed-ended questions to quantify the respondents’ opinions on the research topics and a qualitative approach with open-ended questions to gather more detail. Depending upon the type of information requested, the closed-ended questions used either a three-point Likert scale (“always,” “occasionally,” and “never”) or a five-point Likert scale (“strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “neither disagree nor agree,” “agree,” and “strongly agree”). The surveys were distributed online. The main purpose of these surveys was not to increase the generalizability of the results but to test the hypotheses with a large sample, to test the findings from the in-depth interviews and literature review with statistical results. In survey (1b), for the questions about the perceptions of social media in crisis communication, the researcher analyzed the data of the agency and in-house groups separately to see if results were similar to the interviews. In survey (2b) with stakeholders, respondents’ answers were compared based upon age to see if younger people would be more positive towards the use of social media in crisis response.

In phase 3, interviews were conducted with the group 1 target population who are public relations practitioners working in-house or in agencies. This research design aimed to explore in more depth the perceptions and intentions to use social media in crisis communication strategies among organizations (RQ1) in group 1, by providing them with the initial results from phase 1 and delving into the possible rationale behind those results. This interview is labelled interview (1c). The recruitment and data collection procedures were the same as for interview (1a).

The interviews' and surveys' questions are presented in the appendix of this paper.

4.1.1. Rationale for interview method.

As stated, the method employed in the first part of this study was the in-depth interview (IDI), or individual interview, which is a qualitative research method that explores attitudes or ideas about a topic of interest through intensive individual interviews with a small number of participants (Babbie, 2013). It is one of the more popular qualitative approaches, typically used to describe concepts, ideas, comprehension and processes (Jugenheimer et al., 2014).

The main advantage of an interview methodology is similar to that of any qualitative study, which is to delve deeply into participants' feelings and responses. More particularly, compared to a focus group, IDI is longer in duration and only focuses on one participant at a time. It thus allows the interviewer to build better rapport with the participants and encourage the participants to express themselves more freely and easily. Therefore, IDI provides the opportunity to gather rich information and thorough insights into participants' feelings on a topic (Bernard, 2011; Jugenheimer et al., 2014). Additionally, after several IDIs, the research should be able to identify if there is a theme in the conversations. It is particularly valuable for concept testing and applied learning, where results can be used to adjust the studied area (Jugenheimer et al., 2014).

In this study, the researcher chose a personal interview approach of a semi-structured type to conduct the interviews. This paper now turns to discuss in-depth the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen method.

4.1.1.1. Personal interview.

According to Jugenheimer et al. (2014), a personal interview is the most common approach when the interview is conducted with one participant at a time. By focusing on one person, the moderator has a bigger opportunity to build trust and gain insights into that person's knowledge and beliefs.

Despite its name, a personal interview does not necessarily occur face-to-face; with technology advancement; it could be conducted over the phone or internet. As mentioned, due to their intimate setup, personal interviews allow interviewers to build a relationship with the participants to obtain rich, in-depth, complex and more trustworthy information (Denzin & Lincoln,

2005; Jugenheimer et al., 2014). In public relations research, personal interviews are used to uncover latent or hidden aspects, or to follow up and clarify previously obtained information (Jugenheimer et al., 2014).

Compared to other kinds of IDI, Bernard (2011) and Babbie (2013) identified several advantages that a personal interview can offer. First, a personal interview can be conducted with anyone, including disabled, illiterate, or very old people who cannot participate in many other forms of research. Second, according to Babbie (2013), a personal interview typically yields a high rate of response, with up to 85 percent completion. Participants are usually more reluctant to turn down an interview in person than in written forms. Third, a personal interview allows the interviewer to immediately clarify questions and probe for more data if a response is off-track, misunderstood, unclear or incomplete. The interviewer presence can also minimize the number of “don’t knows” and “no responses” and aim for a more useful, specific data set. In addition, the interviewer can use different data collection techniques, including open-ended questions, visual cues and clarification, to accommodate the participant’s understanding. Another advantage is that a personal interview can take more time than a survey or many other kinds of research, creating a higher chance to gather complete information, as previously mentioned. Additionally, in a personal interview, the participants only receive one question at a time and do not know the coming questions; they can therefore only focus on the present question and do not have to think ahead. Finally, a personal interview provides the opportunity for the researcher to observe the participants and the context. Some observations include the participant’s general reaction to the topic, race, quality of dwelling, and ability to reply. The interviewer can thus consider if there is a delicate question that should not be asked, and can better interpret and correlate the data with the background and expertise of the participant.

On the other hand, personal interviews have been criticized for their apparent disadvantages. A personal interview is, firstly, usually intrusive, reactive and somewhat biased (Bernard, 2011; Scheurich, 1995). Since the interviewer is human, his or her background carries unavoidable, conscious or subconscious motives, desires and biases that he or she can subtly pass on to the participants. The interviewer may unknowingly tell the participants the expected answer. Another disadvantage is the high investment in both time and money for personal interviews (Bernard, 2011). The more detailed the selection criteria are for participants, the harder it is to find people. One single researcher can only invest a certain amount of effort into the interviews, so it is rare for a personal interview study to have a large sample size, or for a researcher to interview many people with a consistent, positive attitude. Additionally, the longer it takes to find and interview participants, the more likely it is that the research is overtaken by events that interfere with it, such

as a natural disaster or government decisions, or the previous participants changing their opinions on the topic. Therefore, researchers may resort to using convenience sampling for the interview, which leads to a less representative data set. Yet another disadvantage of a personal interview is the possibility of an inaccurate report from participants. Bernard (2011) mentioned that the main reason for this possibility is that once the participants agree to take part in the interview, they will try their best to answer all the questions, despite any misunderstanding of a question, inability to recall the exact experience and use of inference to reply. It takes a great deal of training for a researcher to hold an effective interview and minimize these downsides. For this study, the researcher participated in a workshop to learn how to conduct interviews and administered several mock-up interviews to learn how to minimize biases when asking questions.

4.1.1.2. Semi-structured interview.

According to Bernard (2011), there are four distinct types of IDI that provide a researcher with different amounts of control over participant responses. Each type of IDI produces a different type of data, which would be useful for a different type of research and researcher. Accordingly, the four categories of IDI are informal interviewing, unstructured interviewing, semi-structured interviewing and structured interviewing. In this study, the interviews were semi-structured.

Semi-structured interviewing is a hybrid of structured and unstructured interviewing. Like unstructured interviewing, it encourages participants to open up and freewheel replies with their own terms and pace (Bernard, 2011). However, semi-structured interviewing follows an interview protocol, which can also occur in structured interviewing, with a planned list of topics to cover and an order of questions. The researcher can follow these leads with discretion. Semi-structured interviewing is usually adopted in professional studies, in which the subjects are elite members in the community (Bernard, 2011). As these people expect the best use of their time, a semi-structured interview allows researchers full control of the interview purpose while also leaving room for the participants to follow new leads. In this study, as the people interviewed were public relations practitioners or caring organizational stakeholders, the semi-structured interview was deemed most appropriate.

As semi-structured is usually a technique in conducting a personal interview, it exhibits all the aforementioned advantages and disadvantages of a personal interview. However, according to Galletta (2013), there are two distinct characteristics of a semi-structured interview that contribute greatly to the result of a qualitative research: reciprocity and reflexivity.

A semi-structured interview is constructed to critically engage both the interviewer and participant and probe deeply into the responses. The narrated experience is thus explored through different angles, guided by theory or revisited by other data emerging throughout the interview.

This reflection allows for reciprocity between the interviewer and the participant, and between theory and data as it yields more texturing in the analysis and interpretation of results.

On the other hand, an interview often faces different challenges. As mentioned, a researcher's background can unavoidably produce biases, motives and desires that subtly interfere with the response. In addition, the unpredictability and arising themes in interviewing can complicate the study with ethical, theoretical and methodological issues. A semi-structured interview gives room for an interviewer to reflect on previous questions and relationships with the participant to locate any gaps and interferences. This reflexivity characteristic creates a unique opportunity to recalibrate the data collection and analysis processes, and thus reinforce the research result.

4.1.2. Preliminary themes.

This section presents the preliminary themes for interview (1a) with public relations practitioners and interview (1b) with stakeholders. Preliminary interview questions are presented alongside each theme.

4.1.2.1. Themes of interviews with public relations practitioners (1a).

Interview (1a) was guided by the questions in table 1, which allowed the researcher to examine participants' current crisis communication practice and thoughts regarding adoption of social media for crisis communication. Questions regarding social media adoption were based upon DOI theory.

Table 1

Preliminary Themes for Interview (1a) with Public Relations Practitioners

Dimension of current crisis communication practice	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Preliminary question</i>
Preferred methods for crisis communication	1. What is your opinion of the current use of social media in crisis communication in Vietnam?
	2. If you relate to the Tan Hiep Phat crisis, do you think using social media to respond to the stakeholders would have changed the situation?
Dimension of social media as an innovation	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Preliminary question</i>
Relative advantage of social media	1. Has your organization considered using social media in crisis communication before?
	2. How was the idea of social media adoption brought up in your organization?

	3. Which advantages and disadvantages of social media were evaluated during the consideration? 4. Was social media finally adopted into your organization's crisis communication plan?
Compatibility of social media	1. Do you think using social media in crisis response would improve your current practice? 2. Would you like to increase or decrease the use of social media in crisis communication for your organization? Why? 3. In your opinion, what do you think to be the main influence in adopting or rejecting social media use in crisis response in your organization? Why?
Observability of social media	1. Do you think your stakeholders would prefer seeing the crisis response on social media instead of traditional media? Especially if the crisis started on social media, why would they prefer it? 2. Have you actually used social media in crisis response for your organization? If yes, what were your expected outcomes? How did the stakeholders respond to such effort? If no, why?
Role of the opinion leader in social media adoption	1. Who brought up the idea of social media adoption? 2. Who was the one to make the final decision on whether social media should be adopted?

Under the theme “preferred methods for crisis communication,” two questions were asked. The first question aimed to probe for practitioner opinions on how Vietnamese organizations use social media for crisis communication, and the second question aimed to reveal practitioner opinions on whether using social media channels would have helped the Tan Hiep Phat (THP) company better manage the crisis that its stakeholders started and amplified on these channels. The first question aimed to elicit practitioner opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of social media for crisis communication as well as other aspects of using these channels for this purpose. Asking this question, practitioners would also feel free to discuss the crisis response of Vietnamese organizations in general and to compare crisis response on traditional media to that on social media. The second question was directed at gathering practitioner opinions about how the THP company managed a large crisis that started on social media. As discussed previously, the THP crisis provides a useful example for analyzing organizational and stakeholder points of view since it demonstrates how stakeholders leveraged social media channels to express their opinions and catch the attention of other consumers and the wider public. It also demonstrates what can happen when an organization neglects social media monitoring and the use of social media in crisis response. In

interview (1b) with stakeholders, a similar question is asked about this crisis to generate comparisons between practitioner and stakeholder responses.

The next set of interview themes are all based upon Rogers' DOI. The first DOI theme concerns the relative advantage of social media compared to using traditional media for crisis response. Four preliminary questions ask about relative advantage. The second DOI theme concerns the compatibility of social media with organizations' current crisis communication practice. Three questions are asked within this theme.

The third theme concerns the observability of social media. In other words, the theme considers whether organizations and practitioners have been able to observe the use of social media for crisis communication in order to evaluate whether these channels would be effective for them and could be adopted. Finally, the fourth theme asks about the adoption process. That is, who brings up the idea of adopting social media for crisis communication and who makes the final decision on its adoption.

4.1.2.2. Themes of interviews with stakeholders (2a).

Interview (2a) with stakeholders was guided by the themes and questions in table 2. This interview examined three dimensions: current crisis communication practice, stakeholder current preferred communication channel during crises and stakeholder expectations of social media usage by an organization in crisis communication. The last dimension was based on NCCT theory.

Table 2

Preliminary Themes for Interview (2a) with Stakeholders

Dimension of current crisis communication practice	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Preliminary question</i>
Preferred methods for crisis communication	1. What is your opinion of the current use of social media in crisis communication in Vietnam?
	2. If you relate to the Tan Hiep Phat crisis, do you think that using social media to respond to the stakeholders would have changed the situation?
Dimension of stakeholders' current preferred communication channel during crises	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Preliminary question</i>
Preference of timeliness and responsiveness in organizations' crisis response, Preferred communication channel in organizational crisis response	1. What do you usually do when there is a crisis that you are involved with or care about?
	2. Where do you usually turn for information and support? And through which channel(s)?

Dimension of stakeholders' expectations of an organization's social media usage in crisis communication (from NCCT)	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Preliminary question</i>
Perception of organizational crisis response on social media	<p>1. What would you think about the responsible organization if it did not respond at all? If it responded on traditional media? Responded on social media?</p> <p>2. If an organization responded quickly on social media with a personalized message to stakeholders, how would you assess that organization?</p> <p>3. If a crisis started on a social media channel, would you expect the organization to respond on the same social media channel? Why?</p> <p>4. Does social media use alone make a good crisis response?</p> <p>5. What do you expect of a good crisis response?</p>

Interview (2a) with stakeholders asked preliminary questions on the three dimensions of: (1) current crisis communication practice, (2) preferred channel during crises, and (3) perception of organizational crisis response on social media. Under the first dimension, one theme was evaluated, which was stakeholders' preferred methods for crisis communication. Questions asked under this theme were similar to those asked of practitioners so that the answers could be compared directly. As in interview (1a), the first question aimed to probe for opinions on the use social media for crisis communication in Vietnam, and the second question aimed to reveal stakeholder opinions on whether using social media channels would have helped the Tan Hiep Phat company better manage its crisis that began on social media. Both these questions were designed to allow stakeholders to discuss crisis communication in Vietnam in general and give their opinions about all channels used.

Under the second dimension, which was preferred channel during crises, two themes were evaluated. These themes were stakeholders' preference for timeliness and responsiveness in organizations' crisis response and stakeholders' preferred communication channel in organizational crisis response. Questions designed under these themes aimed to discover what stakeholders do when they come upon a crisis and what channels stakeholders turn to for information and support when there is a crisis. The aim of these questions was to encourage stakeholders to discuss more about their practice of learning about and participating in crises. Through these discussions, the researcher aimed to learn which channels stakeholders find credible and why, how stakeholders use different channels and why, and how stakeholders share information from the different channels and why.

The third dimension, which was perception of organizational crisis response on social media, had a single theme with five questions that were designed to elicit ideas regarding NCCT. To review, NCCT claimed that the channel on which an organization sends a crisis message affects stakeholder attitudes towards the organization as well as responses to the crisis. Researchers Utz, et al. Glocka (2013) concluded that stakeholders had differing responses because their experiences and interpretations of channels differed. Therefore, some Vietnamese stakeholders in this study were expected to appreciate crisis communication on social media while others were not and to have differing attitudes and responses to organizations that use social media for crisis response. The questions aimed to uncover stakeholder attitudes toward organizations that did not respond to their crises versus those that used traditional media and those that used social media. The questions also aimed to consider stakeholder attitudes toward organizations that used social media to respond quickly with a personalized message, whether stakeholders expected organizations to respond of the same social media channel in which a crisis began, whether social media use alone would make a good crisis response, and what they expected of a good crisis response.

4.1.2.3. Testing of preliminary interview questions.

The preliminary interview questions were pre-tested with two small groups (n=3 for group 1 with public relations practitioners and n=3 for group 2 with the general audience). Types of feedback sought were question clarity, suggestions for rephrasing or rewording and any additional comments that the participants think to be relevant. Feedback was assessed by the researcher and adapted to make the final interview questions and administer to the sample population.

4.1.3. Rationale for sampling methods.

4.1.3.1. Nonprobability sampling.

To recruit participants for the interviews, the researcher used nonprobability sampling methods. Unlike probability sampling, nonprobability sampling does not use a random selection process, and each member of a population does not have a known chance to be selected (Andres, 2012). Nonprobability sampling requires researchers' experience and judgment to select the sample (Jugenheimer et al., 2014). The advantages of nonprobability sampling are reduced costs and ease of administration (Jugenheimer et al., 2014). However, since nonprobability sampling lacks randomness and does not allow a researcher to determine the sampling error and reliability, nonprobability sampling is often criticized as biased, subjective and unscientific (Andres, 2012; Jugenheimer et al., 2014). However, if the sampling process is planned carefully, this technique can also provide results that are transferrable to further studies (Andres, 2012). Some major nonprobability sampling methods include quota sampling, purposive or judgment sampling, convenience sampling, volunteer sampling and snowball sampling.

According to Bernard (2011), there are three situations when nonprobability sampling is the preferred method. First, it is preferred when the research is labor-intensive requiring an in-depth study of a limited number of cases, in which every case needs to be considered. Researchers must purposely choose the cases to study, as in-depth research relies a great deal on participants. As the topic goes into sensitive details of each participant's life history, researchers must select willing and informed participants wisely, not randomly (Bernard, 2011). The second situation in which nonprobability sampling should be used is large surveys. When the target population is too large to obtain a truly representative sample, researchers can use nonprobability sampling and document the bias (Bernard, 2011). Lastly, if the study requires cultural data then the informant should be an expert in the studied topic, not just anyone at random (Bernard, 2011).

This dissertation used two types of participants: (1) public relations practitioners in Vietnam and (2) organizational stakeholders and the general audience in Vietnam.

As the research focused on social media use in crisis communication specifically, the researcher saw that the first group of participants needed to be people who have a great depth of public relations knowledge and the crisis communication environment in Vietnam. Therefore, the first group was chosen purposely using a nonprobability approach. For the second group, stakeholders and the general audience, the target population was very large and it would take a great deal of time to obtain lists of the entire population to conduct probability sampling. As a result, the current dissertation also used nonprobability sampling for this group. The sampling techniques employed to find and collect data from these groups were purposive and convenience sampling, which are described in the next section.

4.1.3.2. Purposive and convenience sampling.

The sampling technique used for public relations practitioners was purposive sampling. It is a nonprobability sampling technique used when researchers have decided the purpose they want participants to serve, and the specific characteristics of suitable participants (Bernard, 2011; Jugenheimer et al., 2014). By profiling the participants, researchers can save time, resources and efforts and select only those who have expertise or qualifications that correspond to the study objectives. Purposive sampling is similar to quota sampling, but it has no overall sampling design to decide how many participants to select for each stratum. Researchers rely on how many people they can reach to determine the sample size (Bernard, 2011).

Purposive sampling has many advantages and is ideal for pilot studies, intensive case studies, critical case studies and studies of hard-to-find populations (Bernard, 2011). The last situation involves hard-to-find populations, for which Bernard (2011) noted that researchers must always rely on purposive sampling. In this case, researchers have little chance to create a random,

unbiased sample and must use their own social network to locate potential participants, place announcements and calls for participants, and wait for qualified participants to get in touch.

Regarding the sampling of public relations practitioners, it was not possible to identify the complete population since there is no formal public relations association or statistics of current public relations practitioners there (Van, 2013). Also, as mentioned in Chapter 2, public relations in Vietnam consists of individuals from different backgrounds and practices; thus, it is hard to determine the practitioners with crisis communication expertise. Therefore, this dissertation relied on purposive sampling to locate participants that fit the objectives of the study. However, even though there is no formal report on the current number of public relations practitioners in Vietnam, the researcher, being an active public relations practitioner in Vietnam herself, insists that the number of practitioners with crisis communication expertise is limited. Thus, purposive sampling was used to contact participants and collect data.

The second group of participants consisted of Vietnamese stakeholders and the general public. To assess this group, the researcher employed convenience sampling, which is another nonprobability sampling method that simply draws on easily accessible participants (Andres, 2012). In this approach, participants are chosen based on convenience, in terms of being close to the researcher geographically or culturally, or being available at the time and place of study. Researchers find convenience sampling useful in exploratory research, in combination with other probability sampling methods, or when a population is homogeneous (Andres, 2012). In any other situation, data from convenience sampling are usually biased and lack generalizability (Jugenheimer et al., 2014). Nevertheless, with careful planning, convenience sampling can provide transferability of findings to further topical research (Andres, 2012).

Participants for the second group were selected on the basis of being comfortable using social media and caring about social issues and business news in Vietnam. The researcher relied on convenience sampling to find participants for this group for two reasons. First, the recruitment criteria (to be defined in the next sections of this chapter) was quite broad, so the target population was quite large. Second, and more importantly, the purpose of studying this group was to understand stakeholder expectations of social media use in crisis communication. The longer the data collection would take, the more likely the responses would change over time. With resource and time constraints, the researcher chose not to draw a truly random and representative sample for this part of the study and opted for more direct and quick data collection methods.

4.1.4. Rationale for sample size adopted.

As discussed, this research consisted of in-depth interviews (IDI), two sets of interviews for public relations participants and one for stakeholders. For IDIs, a large sample size is not as

important as the story the participants provide. An ideal sample size is not determined by statistical values but by data saturation. Thus, researchers should aim for a large enough number of interviews with different participants to give approximately the same responses (Jugenheimer et al., 2014).

According to Jugenheimer and colleagues (2014), there is no formal, “agreed” sample size for IDIs. Instead, the researcher commonly determines the ideal sample size once the answers no longer provide new information. Jugenheimer et al. suggested that one IDI is generally equal to four to six focus group participants. As a result, they recommend that a sample size from five to 12 people be adopted for a single participant profile. They consider an IDI sample of that size to be big enough to show patterns of ideas and perceptions. This range is adequate to provide a level of depth so researchers can determine themes and patterns from the responses. This research resulted in a sample size of 12 for the public relations practitioner interviews and 13 for the stakeholder interviews.

4.1.5. Rationale for locations of recruitment.

In Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh and Ha Noi are two major cities with significant contributions to the economic, political and population growth of the country. Ho Chi Minh is the metropolitan core in the southern part of Vietnam, while Ha Noi is the capital, the dominant city in the northern part. Ho Chi Minh has developed quickly in terms of economy and manufacturing, while Ha Noi has moved more toward heavy and high technology industries (The World Bank, 2013). In a recent review of world urbanization (The World Bank, 2013), these two cities were assessed to be responsible for sustaining strategic development of the country. Most Vietnamese employment, investment and manufacturing activities are driven in these cities. The researcher assumes that as there are larger, better-invested companies in Ho Chi Minh and Ha Noi, there are more organizations that pay attention to reputation management and proactively plan for crisis communication. Therefore, for this sample population, this research sought public relations practitioners from these two locations to study their crisis communication insight and intention to adopt social media into their plans.

Ho Chi Minh and Ha Noi are also the two cities where people are most educated and use social media most frequently. Vietnamese universities are concentrated in these cities, and people who live there have the highest education levels in the nation (Clark, 2014). Accordingly, the researcher believes that the higher education enables citizens in these locations to read news and follow recent and impactful incidents, such as crises, more readily. In addition, according to a report on digital use in Vietnam by the consultancy Moore Corporation (2015) that focuses on performance-based advertising in Vietnam, social media users in Ho Chi Minh and Ha Noi altogether account for 40 per cent of total nationwide users. Hence, to study stakeholder perception

of social media use in crisis communication, this dissertation recruited social media users in Ho Chi Minh and Ha Noi.

4.1.6. Public relations practitioner (group 1) recruitment procedure.

Public relations practitioner (group 1) participants took part in interview (1a). The selection criteria, which had no preference over gender, was as follows:

- The participant was practicing public relations in an agency or a marketing, public relations or communication department within an organization in Vietnam.
- The participant held one of the following job titles or equivalent:
 - Marketing supervisor, marketing manager or marketing director
 - Public relations supervisor, public relations manager or public relations director
 - Communication supervisor, communication manager or communication director.
- The participant had at least two years of experience in public relations practice.
- The participant understood and had knowledge about social media, crisis communication and crisis response.
- The participant had at least two years of working experience in Vietnam.
- The participant understood the business environment and culture of Vietnam.

The participants for interview (1a) were public relations experts in Vietnam who had knowledge about crisis communication. As public relations practitioners working in agencies might have different values and practices than practitioners working in in-house environments (public relations departments within companies), this research aimed to have participants who were representative of both environments. Since the researcher's profession is also public relations practitioner, which requires high engagement in the local public relations industry, she had close access to qualified subjects and knew how to recruit qualified participants. All potential participants had their LinkedIn profile checked to confirm their job title, workplace and experience. Qualified participants were then asked preliminary questions to confirm if they had been exposed to a crisis and if they had knowledge about social media, crisis communication and crisis response in Vietnam. Participants were deemed to be representative of an agency environment if they are currently working for a public relations or marketing agency and have at least half of their professional career working in such agencies. Participants were deemed to be representative of an in-house environment if they are currently working for an in-house public relations or marketing department and have at least half of their professional career working in such departments.

4.1.7. Stakeholder and general audience (group 2) recruitment procedure.

Stakeholder and general audience (group 2) participants took part in interview (2a). The selection process, which had no preference for gender, was as follows:

- The participant was at least 18 years old (so that he or she had the ability to think independently and reasonably, and that he or she belonged to the target audience of most organizations).
- The participant understood what social media is and how it works.
- The participant expressed care about social issues and business news.
- The participant had lived and worked in Vietnam in the last two years.
- The participant understood the business environment and culture of Vietnam.
- The participant took an active part in a recent social media crisis, such as the THP crisis.

The researcher used purposive sampling to choose 13 participants who took an active part in a recent social media crisis in Vietnam to ask about their expectations of the crisis communication strategy of the organizations involved in their crises in particular, and of any business in general. They were asked about their expectations of the crisis communication strategy of businesses.

4.1.8. Data collection procedure.

In all interviews, participants were presented with an explanatory statement in which they were informed about the purpose of the research and why it was important to have them as participants. If requested, the explanatory statement was handed to participants to keep. A copy of the explanatory statement appears in appendix 4.

The interviews took each participant 15-30 minutes to complete. They were held in Ho Chi Minh and Ha Noi cities of Vietnam, or through a face-to-face setting or Skype video call, depending on their preferences. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in the participants' professional workplaces or public locations. The participants were required to sign the Participant Consent form beforehand and return it to the researcher in person for face-to-face interviews or by email for Skype interviews. The participants were asked one question at a time and could choose to stop the interview at any time or have their answers withdrawn. The interviews were audio recorded. Nvivo software was used to classify, sort and examine the relationship of data. The data from the interviews were subsequently transcribed, coded and entered to Nvivo. The data were then sorted into themes and analyzed thematically. Nvivo was chosen because of its ability to store and organize all unstructured data in one place, and to classify and visualize data so it is more

comprehensible. The target products of interviews (1a) and (2a) were initial perceptions of the participants on the topic, as well as hypotheses to be tested further with quantitative methods.

All forms and interview questions for groups 1 and 2 were distributed in Vietnamese. They were translated to Vietnamese by the researcher and back translated for validation by a professional translator. In turn, all interview responses in Vietnamese were translated into English by the researcher before analysis and back-translated for validation by a professional translator. The collected data was coded with pseudonyms as identifiers. For analysis purposes, the data used did not contain participants' names but only their identifiers.

The research design and data collection for the two rounds of interviews are summarized in table 3 below, adapted from Plano-Clark and Creswell (2008).

Table 3

Summary of Research Design, Procedure and Data Collection for Interviews

Design	Procedure	Product
Qualitative data collection – Interview (1a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interview • Public relations practitioners across multiple organizations in Vietnam • N=12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio recordings • Notes
Qualitative data collection – Interview (2a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interview • N=13 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio recordings • Notes
Qualitative data analysis for interviews (1a) and (2a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcription • Coding and thematic analysis using Nvivo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed texts • Codes and themes
Qualitative results for interviews (1a) and (2a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypotheses for RQ1 • Hypotheses for RQ2
Qualitative data collection – Interview (1c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interview • Public relations practitioners across multiple organizations in Vietnam that have not participated in interview (1a) • N=12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio recordings • Notes
Qualitative data analysis for interview (1c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcription • Coding and thematic analysis using Nvivo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed texts • Codes and themes

Qualitative results for interview (1a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate results • Confirmation or rejection to the hypotheses of RQ1
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4.1.9. Theoretical thematic analysis.

To analyze the interview results, the researcher used thematic analysis, which is a method to identify, analyze and report patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is a method used extensively in qualitative research, as it can help organize and describe data in rich, prevalent details while still holding the depth of analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006; Joffe, 2011).

There are two approaches to thematic analysis: inductive and theoretical. As Braun and Clarke (2006) described, an inductive analysis is a “bottom-up” approach, in which themes arise from data and bear little resemblance to researchers’ questions. On the other hand, a theoretical analysis is driven by researchers’ theoretical or analytical interests on the topic and focuses on certain aspects of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For thematic analysis of the interviews, this study took the approach of theoretical analysis. For the first set of interviews (1a), questions were thematically analyzed using Rogers’ DOI and the literature review to explore whether and how social media was being adopted for crisis communication by public relations practitioners. For the second set of interviews (1b), questions were thematically analyzed using NCCT and the literature review.

4.1.10. Translation and back translation.

A common procedure across all phases of this study was translation and backtranslation. As the data collection of this study were in Vietnamese, after they were conducted and transcribed, the researcher engaged in translation and back translation to ensure that the translated content agreed with the original transcript. Bernard (2011) indicated that when research is conducted in another culture as in this dissertation, the research usually employs a back translation method to minimize errors and confusion stemming from language barriers. Back translation involves two translation processes (Bernard, 2011). First, a researcher carefully drafts the questions and has a bilingual person, who is native in the participants’ language, to translate those questions. The researcher must work closely with that translator to ensure he or she fully grasps the nuances of the questionnaire. Next, the researcher consults another bilingual person, who is a native speaker in the language in which the questions were originally written, to translate the questionnaire back to that language. If there is any loss in the two translations, the researcher must correct the problem. The purpose of this back translation method is to receive consensus from both translators so the participants can understand the questions the way the researcher intended. The above steps were all followed for this study.

4.2. Phase 2: Research Design for Surveys (1b) and (2b)

This section discusses the research method for phase 2 of the study, which consisted of large-scale, internet-based surveys with public relations practitioners and stakeholders. The surveys aimed to test hypotheses developed from interviews (1a) and (1b), the literature reviewed, and theories. The hypotheses are presented in Chapter 5.

4.2.1. Rationale for survey method.

After the interviews, this study used one self-administered web survey containing both open- and closed-ended questions with public relations practitioners (group 1) and another such survey with stakeholders (group 2) to test the hypotheses developed from the interviews and literature review. In this chapter, the advantages and disadvantages of this chosen method are explained and compared with other survey formats.

In a self-administered survey, the interviewer is absent, and the respondents read and complete the survey unaided (Andres, 2012). As mentioned, this study uses the term “survey” to refer to this format. As listed by Andres (2012) and Bernard (2011), there are several clear advantages to self-administered surveys:

- As all respondents receive the same questions, there is no interviewer bias.
- Respondents do not have face-to-face contact with an interviewer, and in most instances, their participation is anonymous, so they are more willing to reply to sensitive topics.
- Respondents can take their time to consult records, thereby allowing for more thoughtful and accurate responses.
- Surveys can employ complicated questions, which may be harder to follow in oral interview methods.
- Surveys can also employ less interesting questions, such as a long list of similar questions, which are easily skipped in interview methods.

Andres (2012) and Bernard (2011) also noted that self-administered surveys are associated with a few disadvantages that a researcher needs to thoroughly consider before choosing this format:

- Since there is no interviewer, the researcher has no control over how respondents interpret the questions. Therefore, survey questions must be designed to be straightforward and unambiguous.
- Respondents can read through all the questions to have an idea about the survey before responding, which is not preferred in some situations.
- There is no guarantee that the actual respondent is the researcher’s intended respondent.

- There is less control over the response rate.
- Self-administered surveys cannot reach illiterate populations or technologically-challenged populations (as in the case of electronic surveys).

Within the self-administered survey category, a popular method is the electronic survey, which is the method employed in this current study. Besides the apparent advantages and disadvantages of a self-administered survey, an electronic survey distinguishes itself with its ability to reach a wider audience. An electronic survey allows researchers to collect large amounts of information quickly and affordably with a relatively high response rate (Bernard, 2011; Jugenheimer et al., 2014). However, the biggest drawback of this method is that there is very limited control of the sampling frame for online participants. As internet use is correlated with age, income, education and location, online samples usually do not represent the target population (Andres, 2012; Jugenheimer et al., 2014). Therefore, data collected from electronic surveys cannot be used to draw conclusions or make generalizations, and this method is employed mostly in studies that do not require representative samples (Bernard, 2011).

There are two types of electronic surveys, which are email and web surveys. Between the two, the web survey has become the more popular research method. A web-based survey employs an HTML interface and database technology to verify participants, administer questions and collect responses (Jugenheimer et al., 2014). A web survey features all the advantages of an electronic survey and an email survey. Additionally, a web survey has more benefits. This technologically sophisticated method prevents respondents from attempting the survey multiple times or skipping mandatory questions and allows for sequencing of questions and automatic data collection, thereby minimizing human errors and data entry expenses (Andres, 2012). Further, previous studies suggested that respondents of web surveys tend to give more honest answers to sensitive questions and are more willing to provide longer answers to open-ended questions (Jugenheimer et al., 2014). However, the limitations beyond those of an electronic survey and an email survey are considerable. Since the method wholly depends on technology, it is subject to technical problems, non-response from technologically challenged people or people with no internet access, and slow connection or hosting that results in non-completion (Andres, 2012). Careful planning and regular follow-up are thus required to target an appropriate group of participants and increase the response rate.

4.2.1.1. Question formats.

Surveys are typically constructed with two types of questions, which are open- and closed-ended. Open-ended questions provide room for respondents to answer in their own words with no restraints. In contrast, in closed-ended questions, respondents must choose one of the given options.

A closed-ended question provides a limited number of response options for participants to choose. The options can be “yes” or “no,” frequency, range, degree of agreement or disagreement, or other mutually-exclusive options. As answers to closed-ended questions are easy to manage, tabulate and analyze (Jugenheimer et al., 2014), this current study employed closed-ended questions in the surveys. The researcher also added “other” as an option to provide an opportunity for participants to freely express themselves. Responses to closed-ended questions in the survey included ordinal and nominal choices as discussed in the next section.

The other question format, open-ended questions, are suitable for exploring new and different information that researchers had not recognized (Jugenheimer et al., 2014). This format gives respondents the flexibility to include their opinions and the rationales for their replies. Open-ended questions can be followed by more open-ended questions to delve deeper into each response and gather more thoughtful insights. The survey part of this present study included mostly closed-ended questions, with a few open-ended questions at the end to allow participants to add their own comments to the research topic.

4.2.1.2. Survey data type and measurement.

Both ordinal and nominal data were collected in this present study. Ordinal data report responses collected in an order or rank, from the smallest to the largest, from the first to last, or from the most to the least (Jugenheimer et al., 2014). Ordinal data provide an opportunity for researchers to quickly collate and group responses and define the studied characteristics or attributes in an ordered manner. Researchers can easily report the number of participants who chose each response option, or report each chosen option as a percentage. As the data are in order, it is also easy to determine the mode and median of data for statistical analysis.

Likert scale is the most commonly used scale to measure ordinal data, in which the respondents select which option best reflects their opinion (Bernard, 2011; Jugenheimer et al., 2014). Instead of asking a question, researchers provide a statement and use the Likert scale to measure respondents’ level of agreement to that statement. Typically, a Likert scale has five points, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” However, while the principle remains the same, it can sometimes become a three- or seven-point scale, with an approve-disapprove, favor-oppose, most often-least often, or excellent-worst measurement (Bernard, 2011). However, while a Likert scale measures opinions in an ordered manner, it does not provide the reason for such opinions. Hence, a questionnaire usually includes additional clarifying questions to determine the “why” from Likert-type data (Jugenheimer et al., 2014). In this present study, the researcher used a traditional five-point, agree-disagree Likert scale to measure participants’ opinions and a three-point scale to measure frequency of the public relations practice in Vietnam.

The other type of data collected in this study was nominal data. These data have no specific order, value or structure, and are placed into mutually exclusive and collective exhaustive categories (Jugenheimer et al., 2014). Despite the statistical limitations, this type of data allows researchers to gain deeper understanding of the survey responses. The current study collected nominal data for profiling respondents and gathering more insights to the respondents' views on social media use.

4.2.2. Survey instruments.

4.2.2.1. Public relations practitioner (group 1) instrument design.

The survey for group 1 (public relations practitioners) of this study examined three dimensions, which were current crisis communication practice, social media as an innovation, and social media as a new technology in business settings. Accordingly, the survey contained the following measures: preferred channel for crisis communication, preferred social media channel for crisis response, social media's relative advantages, social media's compatibility, opinion leader's role in social media adoption, social media's performance expectancy and social media's effort expectancy. The first section of the survey consisted of demographic questions to confirm the respondents' qualification for the survey. Demographic questions included the respondents' expertise, number of years working in the public relations industry, and the type of organization with which they were involved. The second section asked respondents how often their organizations engaged in crisis communication on the provided channels. The options included "always," "often" and "never" for each engagement. The third section asked respondents for their agreement or disagreement level to the provided statements regarding public relations practice in Vietnam within a five-point scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." In addition, respondents were given an opportunity to elaborate on their previous responses and offer more insights to the crisis communication current practice and trends in Vietnam in the final open-ended section. The measuring items were randomly mixed together. The items employed in the survey for group 1's participants are described in table 4. The hypotheses and sub-hypotheses tested in survey (1b) are explained in detail in Chapter 5.

Table 4

Measures for Survey (1b)

Dimension of current crisis communication practice		
<i>Role</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Hypothesis examined</i>

Preferred methods for crisis communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Your organization responds indirectly to stakeholders about crises with media conferences and media releases. 2. Your organization responds directly to stakeholders about crises on social media channels. 3. Your organization has preferred channels to communicate crisis with stakeholders. That is, your organizational regularly uses the same channels to communicate about a crisis. 4. Your organization chooses channels to communicate crisis with stakeholders based on the characteristics of each crisis. 	H1a
Preferred media channel for crisis response	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Your organization responds to stakeholders about crises through Facebook. 2. Your organization responds to stakeholders about crises through blogs. 3. Your organization responds to stakeholders about crises through social forums. 4. For a single crisis, your organization uses two or more types of media channels to respond to stakeholders. 	H1b
Dimension of social media as an innovation (from DOI)		
<i>Role</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Hypothesis examined</i>
Social media's relative advantage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. During crises, your organization believes that communication on traditional media is easier to control than on social media. 2. During crises, your organization believes that communication on traditional media is more appropriate than on social media. 3. During a crisis, your organization believes that communication on traditional media is more professional or official than on social media. 4. During a crisis, your organization believes that communication on traditional media is more effective at appealing to the target audience than social media. 5. During a crisis, your organization believes that people trust information on traditional media more than that on social media. 	H1c
Social media's compatibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. During a crisis, your organization believes that people mainly seek news on traditional media. 2. During a crisis, your organization believes that people mainly share news from traditional media. 	H1d

	3. During a crisis, your organization believes that people mainly seek news on social media.	
	4. During a crisis, your organization believes that people mainly share news from social media.	
Opinion leader's role in social media adoption	1. You alone (as a public relations practitioner or public relations agency) raise the idea whether to use social media for crisis response. 2. Your public relations department or public relations agency, as a team, raises the idea whether to use social media for crisis response.	H1e
Dimension of social media as a new technology in business setting		
<i>Role</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Hypothesis examined</i>
Social media's performance expectancy (usefulness)	1. During a crisis, your organization believes that social media makes crisis communication easier than traditional media. 2. During a crisis, your organization believes that social media makes crisis communication faster than traditional media. 3. During a crisis, your organization believes that social media makes crisis communication more cost-effective than traditional media.	H1f
Social media's effort expectancy	1. Your organization believes that responding to a crisis on social media requires much more time and effort than with traditional media. 2. Your organization believes that responding to a crisis with traditional media takes much more time and effort than on social media. 3. Your organization knows social media well enough or has enough technical support to integrate social media into its current crisis response process. 4. Using social media in crisis news sharing and crisis response is easy for you or your organization. 5. Your organization is willing to use social media for crisis response.	H1g

4.2.2.2. Stakeholder (group 2) instrument design.

The survey part for stakeholders (group 2) of this study examined two dimensions, which were their current preferred communication channel during crises and their expectations of an organization's social media usage in crisis communication. Accordingly, the survey contained the following measures: preference of timeliness and frequency of communication in organizations'

crisis response, preferred communication channel in an organization's response, perception of a social media response, and beliefs about secondary reactions to organizations that respond on social media. The first section of the survey asked for respondents' demographic information to confirm their qualification to undertake the survey. Demographic questions included the respondent's age and knowledge about social media, social issues and the business landscape in Vietnam. The second section consisted of questions on stakeholder's preference and evaluation of an organization's social media usage in crisis communication. Respondents could express their agreement or disagreement level to the provided statements within a five-point scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Additionally, respondents could freely express their expectations of an organization's crisis communication in Vietnam in the final open-ended section. The measuring items were randomly mixed together. The items employed in the survey for group 2's participants are described in table 5. The hypotheses and sub-hypotheses tested in survey (2b) are presented in detail in Chapter 5.

Table 5

Measures for Survey (2b)

<i>Dimension of stakeholders' current preferred communication channel during crises</i>		
<i>Role</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Hypothesis examined</i>
Preference of timeliness and responsiveness in organizations' crisis response	1. During crises, you expect organizations to share official, carefully-crafted information, even if it takes more time to respond.	H2a, H2b
	2. During crises, you expect organizations to share quick and direct information, even if the information may not be official or verified.	
	3. You believe traditional media is a credible channel for organizations to share crisis information.	
	4. You believe traditional media is a quick channel for organizations to share crisis information.	
	5. You believe traditional media is a convenient channel for organizations to share crisis information.	
	6. You believe social media is a credible channel for organizations to share crisis information.	
	7. You believe social media is a quick channel for organizations to share crisis information.	
	8. You believe social media is a convenient channel for organizations to share crisis information.	

Preferred communication channel in organizations' crisis response	1. During crises, you expect the organization to share information on traditional media. 2. During crises, you expect the organization to share information on social media. 3. If a crisis starts on social media, you expect the involved organization to respond on the same social media channel.	H2c
<i>Dimension of stakeholders' expectations of an organization's social media usage in crisis communication (from NCCT)</i>		
<i>Role</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Hypothesis examined</i>
Perception of organizations' crisis response on social media	1. If an organization responds quickly and directly through social media, you'd think the organization is sincere. 2. If an organization responds quickly and directly through social media, you'd think the organization is caring about its stakeholders. 3. If an organization responds quickly and directly through social media, you'd think the organization is willing to have a dialogue with the stakeholders.	H2d
Reactions to organizations' crisis response on social media	1. If an organization responds quickly and directly through social media, you would be more likely to stop sharing bad news or talking badly about the organization. 2. If an organization responds quickly and directly through social media, you would be more likely to support the organization after the crisis.	H2e

4.2.2.3. Testing of survey instruments.

The survey instruments were pre-tested with two small groups (n=5 for group 1 with public relations practitioners and n=10 for group 2 with the general audience). Types of feedback sought were question clarity, suggestions for rephrasing or rewording and any additional comments that the respondents think to be relevant. Feedback was assessed by the researcher and adapted to make the final testing instruments and distribute to the sample population.

4.2.3. Rationale for sampling methods.

Similar to the interviews, the surveys in this research also used nonprobability sampling methods. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were employed to find initial respondents for the surveys. Afterwards, the snowball sampling technique was used. The participants of the two sets of interviews were asked to refer other suitable practitioners in their network or other stakeholders to answer the surveys.

4.2.3.1. Snowball sampling.

Snowball sampling works similarly to chain referral, in which researchers identify a small number of prospective participants then ask them to recommend other people they know with the characteristics that match the research purposes (Jugenheimer et al., 2014). The snowball sample size grows with each referral until no new people are identified. Bernard (2011) suggested that snowball sampling should be used when a population is hard-to-study or hard-to-find. According to Bernard, such a population contains very few members who are scattered geographically, members who are stigmatized and isolated, or elite individuals who do not care for participating. In these cases, researchers rely on a few initial contacts and seek their cooperation to develop a network of prospective participants, as these contacts tend to best know people like themselves who are willing to participate (Jugenheimer et al., 2014).

The strengths of snowball sampling include the reduction in time and cost for data collection and high response rate (Jugenheimer et al., 2014). Additionally, in small populations or homogeneous populations, snowball sampling is an effective method to build an exhaustive, representative sample (Bernard, 2011). However, in large populations, the chance for sample bias is high, as people with few social connections are least likely to be referred and are often excluded from the research (Bernard, 2011; Jugenheimer et al., 2014).

4.2.4. Rationale for sample size adopted.

Since the surveys in this dissertation used nonprobability sampling to select respondents, the findings are not necessarily generalizable to the target population. To control uncertainty and bias of these surveys, the researcher incorporated more data and increased the statistical power of results by using larger sample sizes. For the sample population of the first group of respondents, which consisted of public relations practitioners, this study sought a minimum of 50 people. As mentioned, there is not an official statistic about the number of public relations practitioners in Vietnam. The researcher based the sample size on professional experience. She believes that a sample size of 50 is large enough to ensure trusted findings.

For the sample population of the second group of respondents, which consisted of organizational stakeholders and general audience, this study sought a minimum of 350 respondents. Since this target group is the majority of the Vietnamese internet population, which is 50 million people (Kemp, 2017), the researcher based the sample size on the required size for large populations at 5% confidence interval, which is 384 (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The survey for this group aimed to get as close as possible to that number.

In addition, the researcher aimed to have this group's sample representative of the target population. Since the public relations practitioners that were interviewed perceived age as a factor

in deciding whether social media should be used in crisis communication, this research chose age as a criterion for locating respondents for the stakeholder group. Based on a 2013 report of Statista, a leading statistics company on the internet, the age distribution of Vietnam's internet users is as follows: 40% below age 24, 32.8% from 25 to 34 years old and 27.3% above 35 ("Age distribution," 2013). The survey of stakeholders aimed to have a sample with age groups as close to this age distribution as possible.

4.2.5. Public relations practitioner (group 1) recruitment procedure.

Survey (1b) of public relations practitioners used the snowball sampling method to recruit participants. They were selected from practitioners in Ho Chi Minh and Ha Noi, as these are the two main hubs of businesses and public relations agencies in Vietnam. Participants of interview (1a) were also asked if they could forward the survey to their colleagues and peers who also met the criteria. Early respondents of (1b) were also encouraged to forward the survey link to whomever they considered qualified. To verify the validity of the responses, all potential participants had their LinkedIn profile checked to confirm their job title, workplace and experience. Qualified participants were then asked preliminary questions to confirm if they had exposed to a crisis and if they had knowledge about social media, crisis communication and crisis response in Vietnam. Unqualified participants were prompted to leave the survey, or their submissions were removed from the final assessment.

Survey (1b) was administered until it had a minimum of 50 respondents, which occurred within five weeks.

4.2.6. Stakeholder (group 2) recruitment procedure.

Survey (2b) of organizational stakeholders and the general audience used snowball and convenience sampling methods to engage respondents. Since Ho Chi Minh and Ha Noi represent the southern and northern parts of the country, respectively, and the researcher wanted to ensure the diversity of the respondents demographically, initial respondents were from both cities. The researcher shared information of the survey in online groups discussing about a recent social media crisis in Vietnam to approach people who involve with or have interest in such crisis or crisis communication.

Similar to survey (1b) with public relations practitioners, the initial participants from interview (2a) with stakeholders were asked to forward the survey to their peers, and early respondents of (2b) were also encouraged to forward the survey link to whomever they considered qualified. Additionally, the link to survey (2b) was posted on the author's Facebook page to target the professional network as well as the social media-savvy groups on Facebook. Survey (2b) was administered until it had a minimum of 350 respondents.

As a verification method, all participants were then asked preliminary questions to confirm if they had exposed to a crisis and if they had knowledge about social media, business environment and social media crises in Vietnam. Unqualified participants were prompted to leave the survey, or their submissions were removed from the final assessment.

4.2.7. Data collection procedure.

Before taking the surveys, all respondents for each survey were presented with an explanatory statement in which they were informed about the purpose of the research and why it was important to have them in the study. If requested, the explanatory statement was subsequently shared with them as a download link.

The surveys were expected to take each respondent five to 15 minutes to complete. The surveys were administered online using Google survey tool and one question was displayed at a time. Submitting the completed survey was taken as consent to participate in the study. The respondents could withdraw their responses at any time before submitting the survey. Data from the surveys were analyzed with SPSS to obtain descriptive and comparative statistics. The target products from this quantitative analysis were factor analysis. The overall results were integrated and interpreted to discuss further and identify the implications of the study.

All forms and survey questions in this research were distributed in Vietnamese. They were translated to Vietnamese by the researcher and back translated for validation by a professional translator. In turn, all survey responses in Vietnamese were translated into English by the researcher before analysis and back-translated for validation by a professional translator. The collected data were coded with pseudonyms as identifiers. For analysis purposes, the data used did not contain participants' names but only their identifiers.

The research design and data collection process of the surveys are summarized in table 6 below, adapted from Plano-Clark and Creswell (2008).

Table 6

Summary of Research Design, Procedure and Data Collection for Surveys

Design	Procedure	Product
Quantitative data collection – Survey (1b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey administered online using Google survey tool • Snowball sampling • Public relations practitioners across multiple organizations • N=50 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic data • Numerical item scores • Responses to open-ended questions

Quantitative data collection – Survey (2b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey administered online using Google survey tool • Snowball and convenience samplings • Age 18+, tech-savvy people across Vietnam • N=350 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic data • Numerical item scores • Responses to open-ended questions
Quantitative data analysis for surveys (1b) and (2b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPSS • Descriptive and comparative statistics • Identify results to be followed up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors analysis
Quantitative results for surveys (1b) and (2b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical displays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary tables and charts
Combined results – Meta-analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration and interpretation of overall results • Quantitative results • Qualitative quotes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion • Implications

4.2.8. Rationale for statistical tests.

According to Hollander, Wolfe and Chicken (2014), nonparametric procedures are employed when the population is not normally distributed. In this study, since the data are ordinal, with no fixed intervals among the scale items, distributed normal distribution cannot be assumed. Therefore, in this study, nonparametric statistical procedures were employed to identify the significance of any differences between groups. More specifically, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test and Friedman test were used to compare the related samples. In this research, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to compare two related samples, and the Friedman test was used to compare three samples in the data.

Wilcoxon signed-rank test is used to compare two related samples (Corder & Foreman, 2014). In this study, it was used to detect whether two dependent samples were selected from the surveys having the same distribution with the confidence interval of 95%.

Similarly, the Friedman test is a nonparametric alternative to ANOVA, used to determine differences among three or more related samples (Corder & Foreman, 2014). This study used the Friedman test when there were three or more groups to compare to identify if at least one sample was different from the others. However, the Friedman test does not identify where differences are from, so a post hoc Wilcoxon test was used to analyze sample pairs for statistically significant differences. The confidence interval employed for Friedman tests in this research was 95%.

4.3. Phase 3: Research Design for Interview (1c)

The last part of this study consisted of interviews with Vietnamese public relations practitioners. Similar to the interviews in phase 1, the interviews in phase 3 were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach.

4.3.1. Preliminary themes.

Similar to interviews (1a) and (1b), interview (1c) was a semi-structured interview. The interview included a structured part with a planned list of topics to cover and an order of questions to follow and an unstructured part with questions arisen from participants' experience and responses. The questions and themes in this interview are described in table 7 below. These themes and questions were developed following discussion of the phase 1 and 2 results, which are presented in Chapter 7.

Table 7

Preliminary Themes for Interview (1c)

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Question</i>
Social media's relative advantages	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What do you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of social media use, compared to traditional media use, in crisis response?2. Have you used social media as main channels to respond during crises? If yes, are social media your preferred crisis communication channels and why? If no, are social media listed as a type of channel to use in your crisis communication plan? If you haven't used social media for crisis communication, why not?3. Why have you (or haven't you) included social media in your crisis communication plan?4. One of the findings of previous research was that Vietnamese stakeholders use traditional media more than social media to seek and share crisis information. Does this finding make you plan to use traditional media and social media in crisis communication any differently?5. Does the age group of your stakeholders affect your choice of crisis communication channel?6. One of the findings of previous research was that if an older stakeholder knows about social media, he or she typically thinks more highly of these channels and organizations that use them than do younger stakeholders. Does this make you plan to use

	<p>traditional media and social media in crisis communication any differently?</p> <p>7. One of the findings in the previous literature was that when comparing the influences of the communication medium and message on organizational reputation during crises, the choice of medium can influence crisis communication results. What do you think about this finding? Can you give an example in which this statement holds true (or does not hold true) and lessons learned?</p>
Trust of social media	One of the findings of previous research was that Vietnamese stakeholders do not trust crisis information shared on social media channels. What do you think about the statement? Does it make you plan your crisis communication any differently?
Crisis communication content strategy	One of the findings of previous research was that Vietnamese organizations underappreciate the value of sincerity and accommodative content (including corrective action, and mortification or apology). What do you think about this finding? Can you give an example of when this statement holds true (or does not hold true) and lessons learned?
Focus of public relations in Vietnam	While the primary focus of public relations worldwide is reputation and reputation management, the focus of public relations in Vietnam is more aligned with promotional and marketing goals. Why do you think this happens? How does it affect your practice in crisis communication?

4.3.2. Public relations practitioner (group 1) recruitment procedure.

The participants for interviews (1a) and (1c) are similar and were chosen using the same selection criteria and data collection procedure as detailed in section 4.1. All participants were public relations experts in Vietnam who had knowledge about crisis communication. Since there was a time gap between these two sets of interviews, making it difficult to reach the original participants of interview (1a), the participants of interviews (1a) and (1c) were different.

4.4. Ethical Approval and Considerations

The research associated with this thesis received ethics approval from the Bond University Human Research Ethics Committee. The ethics application number is 0000015357.

4.5. Time Frame of Interviews and Surveys

This section presents the time frame in which each phase was conducted.

- Phase 1:
 - Interview (1a) was conducted from June to October 2016.

- Interview (2a) was conducted from June to November 2016.
- Phase 2:
 - Survey (1b) was conducted from January to March 2017.
 - Survey (2b) was conducted from January to March 2017.
- Phase 3:
 - Interview (1c) was conducted from December 2017 to January 2018.

4.6. Summary

This section presented the research method for the study. As discussed, a mixed methods approach was taken, which consisted of three phases. Phase 1 consisted of semi-structured interviews with Vietnamese public relations practitioners and Vietnamese stakeholders. The interviews were conducted with the aim of generating hypotheses for testing in phase 2 through surveys. All interviews were analyzed thematically. Next, phase 2 consisted of two large-scale surveys of Vietnamese practitioners and stakeholders. For the practitioners, statistical tests were used to compare answers of respondents working in-house and in agencies. For the stakeholders, statistical tests were used to compare answers among different age groups. Finally, phase 3 consisted of another round of interviews with Vietnamese public relations practitioners to consider any contradictions between the interview and survey results and to delve deeper into the organizational use of social media for crisis communication in the country. Phase 1 results are presented and discussed in Chapter 5, and phase 2 results are presented and discussed in Chapter 6. Next, Chapter 7 presents a comparison of the phase 1 and 2 results. This comparison led to phase 3, which was a final set of interviews with public relations practitioners. These interview results are presented in Chapter 8. Finally, Chapter 9 presents a discussion of the overall findings, and Chapter 10 concludes the dissertation.

Chapter 5: Phase 1 – Results and Discussions of Interviews (1a) and (2a)

This chapter presents key themes arising from interview (1a) with 12 Vietnamese public relations practitioners and key themes from interview (2a) with 13 Vietnamese stakeholders. To review, the purpose of interview (1a) was to answer RQ1 about how organizations and public relations practitioners perceive the use of social media channels to communicate with stakeholders during crises. The purpose of interview (2a) was to answer RQ2 about how Vietnamese stakeholders expect an organization's crisis response to appear on social media channels, and what an appropriate or effective crisis response would be. Results of each set of interviews was used to develop hypotheses for testing in phase 2 of the study.

5.1. Results and Discussion of Interview (1a)

To choose the initial 12 participants for interview (1a), the researcher used purposive sampling to choose the initial 12 participants. First, the researcher selected qualified participants from her professional network. Next, through LinkedIn, the researcher searched for other public relations practitioners whose profiles matched the above criteria to fulfill the sample size of 12. These participants were asked about their public relations experience, current crisis communication practice in their organizations and their thoughts on social media use in crisis communication.

Regarding participant characteristics, seven were male and five were female; and eight worked in agencies while four worked in-house. Also, the participants had varying ranges of experience: Five participants had two to five years of public relations industry experience, four had six to eight years, and three had nine or more years. The participants were as follows:

Table 8

Participants of Interview (1a)

Code name	Place of public relations practice	Years of experience
1A	Agency	5
1B	Agency	19
1C	Agency	19
1D	In-house	3
1E	In-house	2
1F	In-house	7
1G	Agency	8
1H	In-house	10
1I	Agency	3
1J	Agency	6
1K	Agency	8

In this section, comments from the public relations participants are organized into four key themes as follows: (1) general perceptions of social media use in crisis, (2) organizational perceptions of social media in crisis, (3) benefits of social media in crisis, and (4) challenges of social media in crisis.

5.1.1. General perceptions of social media use in crisis.

5.1.1.1. On reviewing the THP crisis: Early and on-going communication might have helped THP, while using social media might have worsened the situation.

At the start of each interview, each participant was asked to explain his or her viewpoint about the use of social media through a recent case study, the Tan Hiep Phat (THP) crisis, which began on social media as described in chapter 2. To review, THP is one of the leading beverage companies in Vietnam (Duc Son, 2015). In 2015, the public learned that consumers who reported any problems with THP products were detained by the police for investigation, as THP sued them for tampering with the products and trying to blackmail the business (Thuy Tien, 2015). People began to question THP's product quality and business ethics (Hoang Tung, 2017). As a result, consumers joined hands to boycott THP. Several boycotting groups emerged on Facebook and some of the most popular Vietnamese forums. A few months after the boycott began, THP product sales dropped significantly (Lam Hoang, 2015). In its crisis response, THP did not reply to the enflamed online community and allowed the stakeholders to think and say all they wanted. The only channel through which THP communicated, and did so hesitantly, was traditional media. When THP ignored the online community, members of it became more and more vocal.

In response to this case overall, the participants emphasized that THP's stakeholders largely did not use social media, so making responses on this channel would not have been effective. Participants expressed more concern about other issues of the case than the channels upon which THP responses could have been sent. That is, participants were concerned about the nature of the crisis, the business ethics and previous issues at THP, the development of the case, priorities of each stakeholder group, and stakeholders' actions and reactions to the organization's response.

In the interviews, 11 of the 12 participants gave neither a definite "yes" nor "no" to the possibility that using social media would have helped. As discussed below, participant 1E (an in-house practitioner with two years of experience) thought that the true problem for THP was that it waited too long to communicate, not that it did not use social media:

From my observation, there were four groups involved in this crisis: (1) THP, the company itself; (2) current and potential customers, (3) anti-fans; and (4) the press. Most of THP's

current customers are from rural areas; they did not know about a crisis happening on social media until the crisis was published in traditional news. I saw only the press and anti-fans actively react to the crisis on social media and there was no official declaration given by THP through their website or social forums to respond to the situation. Therefore, only the anti-fans and press used social media to continually change the situation. It was one-way communication coming from online users and anti-fans to put pressure on and attack THP. No response was provided by this organization. So, the real problem here is not whether to use social media; the problem is that the organization was not willing to talk at all. THP did use traditional media to reach the public in the end, but that was much too late.

Other participants expressed that even though social media could have been a helpful tool in this case, it is only a tool. More particularly, they expressed that the THP stakeholders cared less about which communication channel(s) THP adopted and more about the message delivered, as mentioned by participant 1H, an in-house practitioner with ten years of experience:

I don't think social media would have changed anything. The problem was from the inner process. It is not what tool THP should use; it's more about the way THP acts. Bad behavior will not be covered by any tools.

Or, as participant 1C (an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience) shared, if social media had been used, the result from THP's point-of-view might have been worse:

The company's ethics were already questionable. Using a shareable tool like social media might have worsened the situation for THP, as people would have known even more about THP's unethical behaviors. People might have protested against THP more... That's the reason why online tools are not suitable for crises.

Regarding the THP case, participants expressed that the choice of a channel alone was not sufficient for satisfying THP stakeholders or repairing the reputation of such an unethical organization. For participants, an effective response requires that unethical processes are corrected from inside an organization and communicated to stakeholders with an apology. Further, participants said that if social media had been used in the THP case without any change from within the company or an apology given to stakeholders, the situation for THP could have been even worse as news of the company's behavior might have spread even further. Therefore, it appears that if an organization does not intend to correct or apologize for its unethical behaviour, it would probably not communicate about such behaviour on social media or indeed through any channel as it would want to hide the behaviour and wait for the crisis to abate. Acting this way, however, the organization would run the risk of losing its stakeholders who may continue to discuss and build the crisis on social media and perhaps boycott the products.

5.1.1.2. Most Vietnamese organizations think stakeholders seek and share crisis information on social media.

After asking about the THP case, the researcher asked participants about their organizations' perceptions of social media and its use in crisis communication in their current public relations practice. From this point on, all participants answered by referring to the work they do for organizations. For in-house practitioners, this meant work done for their employers, and for agency practitioners, this meant work done for their clients.

During the interviews, four participants (from both in-house departments and agencies) replied that their organizations naturally adopted social media for marketing and business purposes because it is part of the current communication trend. Their organizations think that the stakeholders and most Vietnamese people now seek and share news through social media, with the exception of people in suburban and rural areas and people of older generations. Additionally, these four participants noted that when a crisis starts on social media, the stakeholders pay even more attention to social media for updated information. They said that since organizations should be where their stakeholders are, organizations must maintain a social media presence. When asked if a social media presence is beneficial in crisis response, although the participants might be unsure of its effectiveness, the interviewees agreed that Vietnamese people would prefer social media for an organization's crisis response:

I think it's necessary for Vietnamese organizations to use social media in crisis communication. The number of Vietnamese people using social media to share their points of view or information is increasingly high. I believe social media is an undeniable communication channel. – Participant 1E, an in-house practitioner with two years of experience.

Adopting social media is not a choice; we need to follow the trend. People are now asking questions on social media, sharing opinions on social media, creating issues on social media... Our company doesn't choose social media... Customers are using it. If we don't use it, we don't do our job properly. – Participant 1F, an in-house practitioner with seven years of experience.

Further, even though the participating practitioners and their organizations might be unsure about using social media for crisis response, nine out of 12 interviewees agreed that most stakeholders would like to see a response on social media. The participants also asserted that if a crisis started on social media, stakeholders would want to see a response on those channels. One participant also stated that it was younger people who generally started crises on social media and expected responses on it:

If a crisis started on social media, it is safe to say that the younger stakeholders are the ones who started it. They are the main users of social networks, and they understand the role of social media and its strengths and expect to receive responses on social media. This is logical because if they highly value one type of media, they tend to expect to get results from it. – Participant 1B, an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience.

Stakeholders understand the strengths of social media in relaying information quickly and thoroughly; that is why they use it every day. I think they expect crisis responses on social media. – Participant 1L, an agency practitioner with four years of experience.

On the other hand, participant 1A (an agency practitioner with five years of experience) noted that if stakeholders seek news on social media, this does not mean that they only follow information on an organization's own channels or look for direct responses to the people who started a crisis. Information on social media also includes traditional media news articles that are shared among netizens. As per participant 1A, these traditional media articles on social networks sometimes appear even more credible than a simple online "status" or "comment."

It seems online media is overshadowing traditional media... However, traditional media is still trustworthy. Audiences can compare the news they receive from social media and traditional media and make conclusions. As traditional media is controlled by authorized organizations, the information is examined properly, it gains higher trust... People tend to use social media to get news, but sometimes this comes from traditional media news that they get online.

Besides the global and local trend of using social media, it is also worth noting that the increase in social media use comes from the unique characteristic of Vietnam's traditional media publications:

In Vietnam, traditional media is government-owned, so communication activities are quite restricted. Social media is like a door taking us to more exact, faster information. If social media is important in other countries, it is more vital to our country because of that. Organizations are well aware of its strong effects. They know social media can impact their image and business. I think, in one or two years, social media will be an essential part of business strategies in all organizations in Vietnam. – Participant 1B, an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience.

Based upon participant comments, using social media for crisis communication would support an organization's efforts by allowing the organization to reach additional stakeholders on their preferred communication channel for news. Organizations could also more readily reach people who start a crisis on social media thereby potentially preventing the growth of a crisis. Such

people could be asked to contact the organization directly through a phone number or be referred to a special organizational website about an issue. Also, use of social media for crisis communication may be extra important in Vietnam as on these channels, everyday citizens receive a voice. The voices of citizens could be added to other news that is controlled by the government, thus potentially giving people more detailed and faster news about organizational events.

5.1.1.3. Most participants said that their organizations try to use the same communication channel as their stakeholders.

Four participants indicated that the origin of a crisis and the communication channels that the target audiences use can condition the final adoption decision of their organizations, but it does not turn social media into channels that organizations must use:

We need to understand the crisis, identify our target, and consider how much our target understands us and whether using social media can reach them. Are the people on social media people we have already met or with whom we have newly connected? Do they really matter to us? Sometimes, people on social media are not our prioritized stakeholders. –

Participant 1H, an in-house practitioner with ten years of experience.

The number of people caring about and using social media has increased significantly; but in crisis communication, social media is only a part of the plan. People can be doubtful of the messages we deliver on social media. Press conferences with the attendance of trustworthy publications are still necessary. – Participant 1I, an agency practitioner with three years of experience.

If my stakeholders look at a channel for crisis response, I will be on the same channel to communicate with my stakeholders. If there is any reason that we're not on social media, it means the social media users are not our primary stakeholders. – Participant 1A, an agency practitioner with five years of experience.

Two participants also mentioned that their organizations realized the emergence and importance of social media in Vietnam and employed social media not only in crisis communication plans, but also in any communication activities:

I believe social media is a must-have channel in Vietnam; therefore, enterprises, especially those specializing in communication, should focus on the interaction between the organization with the customers and stakeholders related to this channel. – Participant 1E, an in-house practitioner with two years of experience.

In Vietnam, social media is developing quickly. There are many crises originating and ending here. Using social media is a good way to communicate with stakeholders and solve these crises. – Participant 1A, an agency practitioner with five years of experience.

Most participants appeared to be quite strategic in their choice of communication channels for crisis communication. Social media channels were chosen largely when an organization's prioritized stakeholders were using those channels. However, social media channels were not necessarily used alone but along with traditional media. One participant expressed that some stakeholders doubted organizational messages delivered by organizations on social media, and therefore, it was important to send messages via traditional media, too. People still saw credibility in press conferences that had journalists from traditional publications in attendance.

5.1.1.4. Social media can be used during pre-crisis and post-crisis stages as well as in direct crisis response.

Three participants expressed that if an organization adopts social media, these channels can be used in all three crisis stages, which are pre-crisis, crisis response, and post-crisis. For example, in pre-crisis, Vietnamese organizations use social media to listen in real time to the stakeholders, analyze information and proactively plan for the potential threats:

If social media is the channel where a crisis may be starting, we can use social media to identify the issue and track how it is developing. Then, we will work together with an agency to see how we can proactively respond to minimize the spread and damage. – Participant 1D, an in-house practitioner with three years of experience.

Crisis communication doesn't start with a crisis response. It starts with crisis prevention. In that situation, social media allows real-time listening to our stakeholders. With the right tools and right analysis of the big data, we know what people are talking about us and if a "storm" is going to happen. Then, we can proactively think of a solution, thanks to social media. – Participant 1F, an in-house practitioner with seven years of experience.

During the post-crisis stage, social media can also be used to build or rebuild reputation for an organization after a crisis, by providing positive updates, continuing communicating with the stakeholders and monitoring for feedback.

After a crisis, we must think about how to build or rebuild trust. In situations like this, social media helps to boost evidence that we have changed for the better. It can silently and gradually convey "good content" about us to our target audiences... We can also use it to observe the current situation and check our competitors' information to see if our clients are back on track or not. – Participant 1C, an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience.

Before and after a crisis, social media can be used for social listening, which is real-time tracking of the public sentiments to a brand or a business. It's very useful to know who is talking about us, and what is being said about us, so we can plan for a solution. – Participant 1I, an agency practitioner with three years of experience.

During pre-crisis, an organization can strategically use social media to listen for potential crises and plan how to manage them. Also, during post-crisis, an organization can strategically use social media to build or rebuild trust by continually posting good news about itself and listening to audience responses. Therefore, social media channels are especially useful for managing stakeholder relations before and after crises as they give direct access to stakeholder voices.

5.1.1.5. Organizations hire non-celebrity influencers to express neutral opinions about crises on social media

Participants expressed that Vietnamese organizations have started using non-celebrities as influencers in their crisis communication efforts. From the THP crisis, participant 1I (an agency practitioner with three years of experience) mentioned that such influencers could be a part of the crisis communication plan:

Using a famous celebrity could create a whole new conversation and distract people from the core issues of the crisis. Or maybe not a celebrity, but a social media influencer, since the case started on social media. A smart and well-versed influencer could have posted a “status” analyzing the situation, mentioning the good business history of the organization, and alleviating the community’s concern. Of course, for bigger crises, using influencers would only reduce the fury from the public; it wouldn’t fully resolve the situation. But the organization then could have had some more time to prepare the response and take appropriate actions.

Explaining why an organization should use an influencer, the interviewees said that during such sensitive times as crises, responses from the responsible organization may appear too sophisticated. In this situation, comments from a third party are typically more easily accepted. Most third parties in this case are everyday people who are knowledgeable of certain fields that make them credible to others. They are not celebrities or brand ambassadors. Thus, their opinions can seem unbiased and believable. Participants believed that crises which started on social media should generally be replied to on the same channel (as discussed previously), and that third-parties’ comments should appear on social media. Participant 1A, an agency practitioner with five years of experience, said:

We want to play safe, so we use the opinion influencers to communicate with the stakeholders. We use the points of view of different people towards the problem and post them on the social media. Even though we “seed” content to the influencers, their posts still look neutral and show objectivity, caring and influence. During a crisis, I use social media influencers to support our goal, and I find that they can influence certain groups of people toward our intended direction. The outcome of using influencers follows our expectations,

and the communication is easier to control compared to statements on social media that we have written ourselves.

In contrast, participant 1L, an agency practitioner with four years of experience, mentioned that such “neutral” opinion seeding does not always achieve its goals:

We can use celebrities’ or online influencers’ personal pages to convey messages that are beneficial for us. However, this seeding tactic has been used so often that the public begins to doubt these influencers’ motives, and worse, doubts the organization’s motives. Why can’t they speak for themselves? Do they have anything to hide? These are the kinds of doubt. For me, using influencers only has a temporary effect to distract or soothe the public; we need a more proper plan in crisis communication.

As stakeholders become more aware of how organizations use social media influencers to respond to crises, such stakeholders may become wary of these actions and spread even more bad news about the organizations. The practice of using influencers may indeed backfire. It is likely to be more productive for organizations to use traditional media supplemented by social media to respond to crises and not be accused of hiring influencers.

5.1.2. Organizational perceptions of social media in crisis.

5.1.2.1. Organizations need to research well and plan for crisis management before using any social media.

During the interview, participants were asked what criteria they apply to evaluate the effectiveness of a crisis communication effort, and then to consider how well social media was able to meet these criteria. The two main criteria that the participants mentioned were that: (1) the right messages were delivered and understood in their intended meanings, and (2) the stakeholders replied positively:

I think the information receivers, or our audiences, play a big role in determining the effectiveness of crisis communication. How do they welcome our response? Do they understand it in the way we intended it? Would they share information? How do they react? We need to consider these questions to evaluate our crisis plan. – Participant 1L, an agency practitioner with four years of experience.

According to seven participants, it is the stakeholders who decide whether a crisis communication effort is a success or failure. As mentioned earlier, the lack of control over stakeholder messages in social media makes it difficult for an organization’s messages to be understood correctly or to prevent stakeholders from being exposed to even more negative news. Thus, for some participants, the effectiveness of crisis communication activities with social media is questionable.

Reflecting upon recent organizational crises and how companies and the general public reacted, seven participants indicated that issue management must be well planned before an organization tries to use social media:

Social media should be used only to send out apologies or to distract public attention for a while. As it is a two-edged knife, it can either reduce the seriousness or worsen the crisis without well-planned issue management. – Participant 1I, an agency practitioner with three years of experience.

Of all participants, those with more experience (of nine years or more) were more cautious of using social media and doubted its results. They, however, were willing to adopt these channels if their target audience prioritized them:

Social media can aim at the right target but we can't say if it is an effective tool for crisis communication unless we understand the inner characteristics of the crisis. – Participant 1H, an in-house practitioner with ten years of experience.

Organizations are very hesitant to use social media. They want to control the information, alter the information on social media to their benefit. However, they can't; so they hesitate. In my opinion, social media will dominate the communication stream in a few years so we need to learn how to use and cope with it. – Participant 1B, an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience.

As discussed by these participants, the main disadvantage of using social media channels for crisis communication is the uncontrollability of their content due to two-way communication. If organizations post crisis messages on social media, they cannot know how stakeholders will respond. Organizations are therefore reluctant to use these channels for sensitive information. One participant recommended that organizations use social media only for messages that seem the safest, which are apologies and distractions, but even these messages could lead to poor responses. From interviews with practitioners, it appears that organizations lack knowledge about how best to use social media for crisis communication but believe that they must learn more about these channels because of their growing popularity. Generally, practitioners believe that social media should become part of a crisis communication plan but only with careful planning and deep understanding of the issues.

5.1.2.2. Adopting social media is easy but using it effectively in crisis communication is difficult.

From the results of interview (1a), participants expressed that the expected effort to simply start using social media in crisis communication is reasonable, but the effort to effectively use these channels is more considerable. Most interview participants mentioned that initially, social media

takes little time, effort and money to put in place. As the public relations practitioners are also a part of the Vietnamese community, they are used to communicating on social media every day:

As we already use social media in our everyday activities, it's not hard to start using it for business, or for crisis communication. Much of my work is now on social media. –

Participant 1G, an agency practitioner with eight years of experience.

Further, it was discussed that since social media is already used for other communication activities, using it for crisis communication should not take much more effort:

We haven't faced any crises at all. But in the case of a crisis, we would certainly consider using social media to respond. We already interact with our customers on social media during our marketing campaigns, so using social media channels during crises shouldn't take extra effort. – Participant 1E, an in-house practitioner with two years of experience.

We don't need a lot of staff to communicate in a crisis with social media. It's cost-effective and everybody can conveniently access it. – Participant 1F, an in-house practitioner with seven years of experience.

On the other hand, four participants mentioned that social media would not be adopted in their crisis communication efforts at all or would only be used with much caution:

The fact that most people are using social media to freely speak up, seek and share news makes these channels chaotic and unreliable. If we want our stakeholders to consider our crisis response trustworthy and reliable, we need to consider other channels. – Participant 1K, an agency practitioner with eight years of experience.

My clients care most about how they control the communication during crises. They are still cautious in releasing the information on this channel because they are unable to control the feedback. Besides this, they know they cannot ban or remove all comments on social media. This is why they need to carefully plan how to use social media or whether they should choose a better channel to approach their stakeholders. – Participant 1B, an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience.

As presented, one participant thought that since everyday people use social media to say whatever they want, these same people might perceive social media messages to be generally “chaotic and unreliable.” Therefore, if organizations were to deliver crisis messages on social media, the messages could be deemed untrustworthy. Generally, practitioner participants expressed ambivalence about using social media for crisis communication but thought that if they were to use these channels for communicating crises, careful planning was required. Participants’ comments indicate that more knowledge about using social media for crisis communication is needed before Vietnamese organizations will use the channels.

5.1.2.3. Some Vietnamese agency practitioners are against the use of social media in crisis communication.

Throughout the interviews, four participants opposed social media use for crisis communication. All four were agency practitioners (out of the eight agency practitioners who participated). These practitioners doubted the effectiveness of social media in crisis communication and strongly opposed adopting social media. They advised that an organization should pay more attention to the priorities of each stakeholder group and stakeholders' actions and reactions to decide how to best communicate in a crisis.

Reflecting on their previous projects, they looked beyond the national trend of wanting to be on social media; they were more concerned about the advantages and disadvantages of these channels. They compared social media to traditional media before making their decisions and suggested sticking to the conventional activities, such as press conferences or offline communication tools, for safer, more controllable and proven results:

My point is to never use social media in solving crises. I would rather hold a press conference, talk directly with the involved stakeholders or use other offline tools. Social media has an immense influence and ability to spread information quickly. In the case of a crisis, social media can make it spread uncontrollably so it's better to use other tools. –

Participant 1C, an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience.

These practitioners expressed that the disadvantages can outweigh the advantages. Using social media in crisis communication leads an organization not only to the chaos of uncontrollability but also to harm an organization's reputation:

My clients and colleagues told me that we should reply on social media to stop this information flow, but I didn't think so... Relying on such an unreliable channel only makes our information unreliable, too. I would disregard information on this channel. Rumors will eventually die down. If they won't, I would always choose traditional media channels for my responses. – Participant 1K, an agency practitioner with eight years of experience.

As a result, these participants usually persuade their clients to use social media in a limited way or to completely reject these channels in crisis communication.

Some of my clients insisted on using social media and I have used it when working with these clients. But in my opinion, we should choose offline tools to better control a crisis. I always advise my client to use as little social media in crisis communication as possible. Social media has a strong impact and fast speed. It will make a crisis grow and spread uncontrollably, eventually worsening the situation. This is the reason social media or any

online tools are not suitable for crisis communication. – Participant 1C, an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience.

As mentioned, although a lot of people are using social media for news nowadays, they know that such news is mostly unverifiable information. If an organization relies on social media to spread their crisis response, the response can be twisted or misinterpreted or mistrusted. It is our clients' call but I would recommend that the clients choose other tools.

– Participant 1K, an agency practitioner with eight years of experience.

The statements of these four agency participants indicate their belief that the selection of channels for crisis communication depends largely on how well the channels allow organizations to control messages. As stated by the participants, social media's two-way communication facility as well as the channels' ability to influence people and quickly spread messages, may mitigate against an organization's ability to control messages. However, the four participants did not seem to have considered how social media channels might be used alongside traditional channels to gain some of the advantages of social media or that there could be ways to use these channels for crisis communication that do not depend so much on the control of messages. Overall, however, these participants' statements expressed strong resistance against using social media for the sensitive task of crisis communication. To manage a crisis in Vietnam, these participants want control over messaging, which they see traditional media as providing with its one-way communication.

5.1.2.4. Some participants recommended using social media and traditional media together in crisis communication

Comparing social media and traditional media uses in crisis communication, three participants insisted that stakeholders still expect crisis responses on traditional media even if a response were given on social media:

I still support a combination of traditional media and social media in crisis communication. Although people may use social media a lot, it doesn't mean they prefer crisis responses on social media. Especially if a crisis concerns consumer rights, people will feel more respected when all the information they receive is from traditional media, like press releases published by trustworthy journalists and publications. – Participant 1E, an in-house practitioner with two years of experience.

The stakeholders know that information on social media is not reliable. They may seek additional information on social media but would still prefer an official response on traditional media. – Participant 1K, an agency practitioner with eight years of experience.

Two other participants looked more into the nature of a crisis to decide the communication message and channel(s). Participant 1H, an in-house practitioner with ten years of experience,

mentioned that social media are just channels for organizations to communicate with stakeholders; it is only after the chosen message and reaction following the crisis that suitable channels should be decided. They agreed that social media should not be used alone but in combination with traditional media. For example, participant 1F, an in-house practitioner with seven years of experience, stated that it may not be clear whether to choose social or traditional media. Therefore, a crisis communication plan may need to use both:

For me, I would never use social media as the main channel. It could take you down with one wrong sentence and the people will scream at you and you're dead... It's complementary. It should not be the sole channel. You do your own strategy and traditional media and social media come side by side helping you.

Accordingly, these two participants stated that they would keep using both social media and traditional media in their crisis communication plans, while they also predicted that there would be an increase in social media adoption in the near future. They explained that their crisis communication plans usually include a combination of social and traditional media to leverage the advantages of both types of channels, and the social media share in the plan could increase in the near future:

I may use more social media than I do now. But I still want to use half social media, half traditional media tools in crisis communication. When combined, the end-result of a crisis should be better. – Participant 1E, an in-house participant with three years of experience.
We are increasingly developing social media tools to be used in many communication activities, including during crises. It is effective and cost-effective. – Participant 1G, an agency participant with eight years of experience.

As one participant stated, a crisis response may be more effective if channels are selected after understanding the crisis. If social media channels are to be used, they appear to be chosen as a second set of channels that potentially offer different advantages to stakeholders than traditional channels. As another participant said, traditional media channels are perceived as giving more respect to people because the messages are sent by more “trustworthy journalists and publications.” Social media channels provide something different or additional to stakeholders but, at least at this time, do not replace traditional media for crisis communication.

5.1.2.5. Content strategy in crisis response: Organizations usually deny a crisis and suppress crisis information.

On content strategy when using social media, the most mentioned approach was that organizations prefer denial and reduction of offensiveness. Results of these interviews indicated that Vietnamese organizations typically suppress crisis information and deny the existence of crises on

social media by trying to delete negative comments and remove harmful information. The organizations also approach social media influencers to say things that will reduce negative feelings and regain public approval. These tactics have been questioned by the general public:

My client asked me if he posts a video response on social media and sees many negative comments, whether I can monitor and delete all those comments, whether I can control all the feedback. I had to tell him that control doesn't mean to erase, but to respond. The stakeholders need a response, and they need it fast. Denying their feelings or requests won't solve the problem. – Participant 1B, an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience.

I have mentioned that social media should not be used for crisis communication, but it's mostly because people don't use it properly. I think the truth is the most welcomed information; but organizations sometimes want to hide the truth at all costs. – Participant 1C, an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience.

During the interviews, only three out of 12 participants mentioned that accommodative content (including corrective action, and mortification or apology) would matter to the overall efficiency of crisis communication:

My principle is that we apologize first then come up with a strategy to regain customers' trust. It depends on the characteristics of each crisis that we decide which communication channel or tactics to use in the strategy. – Participant 1E, an in-house practitioner with two years of experience.

Everybody can make a mistake and a crisis can be the result of one mistake. If an organization is at fault, it's better to admit it, offer an official apology and show the stakeholders how the organization is actively fixing the problem. It does not matter which communication channel to use; the point is to apologize, not to distract people. – Participant 1I, an agency practitioner with three years of experience.

When companies admit that they're at fault, they have to compensate the victims or lose certain revenue, but when crises are over, people will think these companies are responsible and trustworthy. I think in the case that we are a responsible party, we should take the responsibility and apologize. Truth is hard to hide, especially in this digital age. Even though corrective actions and apologies can be costly to the companies, they show commitment and business ethics, which will benefit these companies in the long run. – Participant 1C, an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience.

As found in the interviews, most Vietnamese organizations try to deny their crises and would prefer to delete negative comments about themselves that appear on social media. However, three of the participants said that they advise organizations to be open about and apologize for their

mistakes as well as make reparations to those affected. Because of the wide use of social media and the fast spread of messages on these channels, these participants believe that crises are difficult to hide and that organizations that admit their mistakes will be perceived as more trustworthy, which will benefit the organizations over time. However, the fact that most Vietnamese organizations try to deny and hide their crises indicates that they would be unlikely to use social media for crisis communication as social media promotes transparency. Those organizations that do use social media for crisis communication may come to be perceived as more honest and trustworthy through their sheer choice of using social media.

5.1.2.6. The idea of social media adoption in crisis communication is raised by practitioners as a team.

When considering how their organizations adopted social media, all participants mentioned that after considering its advantages in crisis communication, the idea of adoption was then raised as a team. This team was either an in-house communication or public relations team, and in some cases, a marketing team that oversees the communication channels for their organizations. The objectives of in-house public relations teams versus marketing teams can be different. During a crisis, or during a planning period for crisis communication, public relations teams usually care more about a company's image and reputation, while marketing teams typically evaluate a crisis to see if it will affect business sales:

The people who raised the idea of social media or traditional media use in crisis communication are our public relations team. We in public relations are the ones who interact directly with the target groups, so we recommend ways to interact more effectively.

– Participant 1H, an in-house practitioner with 10 years of experience.

At my company, the ones to recognize crisis signals and to plan a response are the marketing team, so they need to think of the best way to reach the customers. – Participant 1F, an in-house practitioner with seven years of experience.

All in-house participants indicated that an external consulting agency also typically plays a part in the decision to adopt a channel; an agency can suggest and influence the decision with their previous experience dealing with crises:

My strategic communication team members develop the plan together and choose appropriate communication channels based on our target audiences... For short-term plans, or during immediate crises, we also listen to recommendations from our agencies. For long-term solutions, we can also work together with the brand/marketing team. – Participant 1D, an in-house practitioner with three years of experience.

Since our company is a small and medium-sized enterprise, we are not well-resourced. In case of a crisis, we have to depend on agencies for suggestions and management. However, we prefer the most controllable and least spreading channels. – Participant 1E, an in-house practitioner with two years of experience.

Accordingly, the researcher asked the agency practitioners whether they would advise their clients to use social media in crisis communication. Six out of eight agency participants replied that they would and explained that their advice is not a complete recommendation or rejection:

I have to consult my client about social media use because it has changed people's behaviors. People spend a large part of their day with social media activities. It is our responsibility to the clients, as a consultant. We have to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the channel and what we are able to control, and let our clients decide. –

Participant 1B, an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience.

People working in the public relations industry know which tools they have. As a consultant, we just help our clients weigh different options, like when we should use a celebrity to endorse, or use online influencers to calm down the situation, or hold a press conference or distribute a press release to pitch with the media. I usually recommend immediate responding on social media to prevent rumors and pitching to prestigious traditional media channels to gain trust and support. – Participant 1L, an agency practitioner with four years of experience.

In these teams, practitioners evaluate which channels would be most effective for reaching their target audiences. Two practitioners expressed opposite opinions about using social media for crisis communication: One expressed a distinct preference for communicating crises on social media because these channels are fast and stop rumors from spreading, while the other participant expressed that social media would not likely be used because these channels are uncontrollable and spread apparently false and bad information widely. Regardless of whether social media is preferred or likely to be used, however, the use of teams to propose which crisis communication channels reflects the more collectivist culture of Vietnam in which team members should maintain harmony and agree with one another on the approach to put forward to their management.

5.1.2.7. A client or senior manager is usually the final decision maker in adopting social media for crisis communication.

When asked who the decision maker for social media adoption in their organizations is, all agency participants replied that the final decision would be made by their clients, and sometimes a client's board of directors. Within an agency, however, it is a senior manager from the planning team who decides whether social media should be included in recommendations to the clients:

The final decision makers are the clients... They decide the fate of their brands and companies. We agencies can only provide them with different solutions. – Participant 1I, an agency practitioner with three years of experience.

The strategic and planning manager in my agency who is knowledgeable about crisis communication and the client will consider whether to use social media. Afterward, it all depends on the client's view. We work together with a client's communication department to suggest the communication channels, but as a crisis can affect a company in the long run, the client's board of directors usually finalizes the decision. – Participant 1G, an agency practitioner with eight years of experience.

Further, on the client side, it was agreed among all participants that the team managers or even more senior managers make the final decision after considering the recommendations from team members or an external agency:

The social media manager will handle the choice of crisis communication channel. – Participant 1D, an in-house practitioner with three years of experience.

My manager decides, and the team will execute. – Participant 1E, an in-house practitioner with two years of experience.

There are usually two types of decision makers: one type cares about the general image of a business, and the other cares about marketing goals... A company's board of directors will decide on the general image of the business... A marketing manager will decide if the crisis communication goals are more toward the marketing side, with sales objectives. – Participant 1B, an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience.

This approach is common in Vietnam where a team participates in making some decisions, but a senior manager makes the final decision. The team does not challenge the senior manager's decision but follows the hierarchy. For example, Truong, Hallinger and Sanga's (2017) research on decision making in Vietnamese schools found that teams of teachers participated in making decisions on some issues but expected the principal to make the final decision, which team members would follow without question.

5.1.3. Benefits of social media in crisis.

According to the participants, the main benefits of social media in crisis communication are the channels' fast speed and two-way communication capability. These features allow organizations to quickly see stakeholders' concerns and respond to them.

When discussing the advantages of social media for crisis communication, five out of 12 participants said that the most prominent advantage of social media is its ability to spread messages quickly:

Social media is the fastest communication channel... It is a two-way communication channel so we can communicate with our customers to provide solutions in the fastest manner. In contrast, traditional media is more of a one-way communication tool that the customers can only read without any conversation to verify or compare the information. – Participant 1D, an in-house practitioner with three years of experience.

Social media makes it pretty quick for us to see the stakeholders' questions or concerns. We can answer their questions right away. – Participant 1F, an in-house practitioner with seven years of experience.

The fast speed of social media channels may be one influential factor for social media adoption in crisis communication. Those participants who appreciated the speed and two-way communication ability of social media for managing crises clearly want to solve their stakeholders' issues quickly and communicate directly with stakeholders. Such behavior allows for organizational learning and greater likelihood of cultivating stakeholder trust. However, the fast speed of social media channels was also perceived negatively by some participants. This group indicated that social media should be used with caution because of the speed with which negative messages may spread.

5.1.4. Challenges and limitations of social media in crisis.

5.1.4.1. Content on social media channels is uncontrollable and stakeholders may misinterpret information placed on these channels.

Some of the younger practitioners tended to be more aware of the many characteristics of social media, suggesting that the biggest advantage of these channels, which is speed, could also be their biggest disadvantage, and that this disadvantage may outweigh the advantage:

One big advantage of social media in communication is its speed. It has the ability to spread information quickly so information seekers strongly prefer this channel. – Participant 1L, an agency practitioner with four years of experience.

Information on social media can go viral fast, not only with information from your company but also from your competitors or your "enemies." Although things you'd like to share can reach your audiences instantly, so can things you'd never like anyone to know. Speed then becomes a real problem, especially during sensitive times like crises. – Participant 1J, an agency practitioner with six years of experience.

The unwanted spread of harmful information for organizations on social media leads to another concern of these channels, which is control. Five participants agreed that controllability (or uncontrollability) is the major obstacle that prevents organizations from adopting social media in their crisis communication. On social media, stakeholders are free to interpret (or misinterpret) and share crisis communication while organizations may have little influence or interference with it. An

organization's intended communication goal may not always be achieved. Hence, some participants expressed that using social media makes crisis communication harder and less controllable:

It can easily become uncontrollable. Different people have different ways to define control. Some believe losing control equals inability to interfere with netizens' content and influence their thoughts, while others believe that it means not achieving their desired communication goals. There are other definitions, but these two are the most common. That's why people are cautious and use social media to a smaller extent. – Participant 1B, an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience.

Social media's weakness is that there are many flows of different information or different versions of our information. We don't know how people will interpret or interact with them. – Participant 1H, an in-house practitioner with ten years of experience.

As stated earlier, social media is perceived as uncontrollable because negative information about an organization, including speculations, rumors and criticisms, can be spread online just as quickly as positive news:

Speed can be a huge disadvantage to organizations, especially during crises. If users say something wrong, it can be shared so virally, making the issue seem bigger than it actually is. Another disadvantage is the control, or "uncontrol," of social media. When it's so fast and in real-time, organizations can't control anything. – Participant 1L, an agency practitioner with four years of experience.

The participants stated that their organizations weigh the value of speed and controllability of social media and traditional media in different crisis scenarios to make the decision:

Social media spreads information too fast and too uncontrollably... If there are only one or two negative comments, we can try to remove them; but if there are hundreds of negative comments, we can't. The harder we try to tamper with these comments, the worse results we get. – Participant 1C, an agency practitioner with 19 years of experience.

The degree of social media use depends on how much we want to be "safe." We usually use key opinion leaders to seed a neutral viewpoint to help calm down a crisis, rather than make an official response, especially a response on social media. We don't want any crisis information, including our response, to be too widely spread that we can't control it. – Participant 1A, an agency practitioner with five years of experience.

In general, lack of control over social media messages allows for misinterpretation of organizational messages and deliberate spread of negative information. As presented, some participants thought that message control was the most important aspect of crisis communication, and therefore, they preferred not to use social media for crisis communication. Control was

variously defined as inability to remove stakeholders' negative comments, to influence stakeholders, or to achieve desired communication goals. One participant expressed that when he or she tried to delete negative comments, communication problems with stakeholders on social media became even worse. This participant obviously did not know how to respond to a crisis on social media. Another participant expressed that he or she used social media only for calming a crisis. The approach was to ask an influencer to post neutral comments about the organization rather than for the organization to apologize and solve the crisis directly. Yet another participant expressed that the many flows of information on social media channels made it difficult to respond. Together, the participant responses in this section clearly indicate that many Vietnamese organizations have a fear of responding to crises on social media or a lack of knowledge or inability to do so well. Organizations' perception that content on social media channels is difficult to control is therefore a major obstacle to the adoption of these channels for crisis communication.

5.1.4.2. Social media is perceived as difficult to use for crisis response and organizations are wary of it.

While participants agreed that initial adoption of social media is easy and requires little effort, most did not think social media is easy to use for crisis response. They shared doubts in the ability of their companies, teams or agencies to handle a crisis efficiently on social media. Participants stated that their organizations generally felt uneasy over the speed and uncontrollability of messages on social media, and lacked confidence in communication teams to be able to keep up with the information flow or manage a crisis effectively. According to the participants, organizations are very cautious in integrating these channels into crisis response efforts:

Social media is easy to adopt, but not easy to handle efficiently, especially during crises and when you have limited staff. There are many mistakes made when we respond to our stakeholders. As social media includes many channels, we need to have enough staff, experienced staff, to monitor, manage and interact on all the channels at the same time to prevent or stop the concerns of stakeholders. – Participant 1E, an in-house practitioner with two years of experience.

Participants mentioned that using social media requires high competency of their social media team. Since the speed and flow of information on social media is almost instant, and all interpretations of others are uncontrollable, using social media in crisis communication requires more time and effort from a highly experienced and responsive team to monitor and craft the responses wisely. This competency was mentioned as one of the two most influencing factors in adopting social media in crisis communication. In most cases, clients think that public relations

teams are not competent enough to handle crises on social media and thus are hesitant to adopt these channels for this purpose:

Sometimes it's not the characteristics of social media that my clients consider. It's whether they trust the consultant agency, their communication staff or their bosses to handle the situation well if a crisis goes viral online. They ask, "Can you keep up with the information sharing on social media? In such little time, can you make the right action or response before the netizens come up with another question?" Sometimes they just want to play safe with traditional tactics. – Participant 1J, an agency practitioner with six years of experience.

In summary, most Vietnamese public relations practitioners interviewed do not think it is easy to use social media in crisis communication. With these new channels, more training of public relations staff for communicating crises appears to be required. Also, more staff may be needed to communicate with stakeholders across the many channels.

5.1.4.3. Social media can reach only some target audiences.

During the interviews, some participants said that not all stakeholders would prefer seeing the crisis response on social media instead of traditional media. Two participants mentioned that people in suburban and rural areas and people of older generations prefer traditional media:

People who live in urban or suburban areas use social media a lot, while rural people have restricted access to the internet and social media. How we decide who our main stakeholders are depends on each crisis and each client. – Participant 1G, an agency practitioner with eight years of experience.

Accordingly, three participants indicated that the limited reach of social media is another disadvantage. Social media can only reach younger, tech-savvy people and people in urban areas; if the target audience of a crisis does not fit these demographic and geographic descriptions, using social media in crisis communication cannot be effective, as previously discussed in the THP case. Therefore, whether the communicator chooses to use social media depends on the stakeholder profiles in each crisis:

A crisis starting on social media will reach mostly young people. Older people prefer traditional media so the crisis information may not reach them until it is published on traditional news. Therefore, to choose the right way to communicate during crises, we need to identify who our main target audience is. – Participant 1I, an agency practitioner with three years of experience.

Internet penetration does not cover all suburban and rural areas. Also, mainly younger people use social media, such as Facebook, while older people still prefer traditional ways. We receive inquiries on Facebook from the young population and phone calls from people

over 35-40 years old. I assume the ways they seek news during crises vary, too. It is split by locations and generations. – Participant 1F, an in-house practitioner with seven years of experience.

In brief, another shortcoming of using social media for crisis communication in Vietnam is that the channels can only reach some audiences, leaving some of the target audience excluded. Therefore, if social media channels were to be used for crisis communication, they should be used along with traditional channels so as to maximize the potential of reaching the entire target audience.

5.1.5. Summary of interviews with public relations practitioners.

The results of the interviews with public relations practitioners indicate that most Vietnamese organizations have tried to be on all communication channels that their stakeholders use, including social media. However, only six out of twelve participants stated that they and their organizations support the use of social media in crisis communication.

As found through the interviews, an advantage of using social media for crisis communication is the ability to quickly learn about and resolve customer issues. Organizations able to use social media in this way are likely to have trusting stakeholder relations. These organizations are acting in an open and transparent manner, which is the type of communication expected on social media. Also, participants said that it is younger stakeholders who are more likely to express their concerns on social media and who would prefer responses on these channels.

Also, as found through the interviews, a disadvantage of social media for crisis communication is the uncontrollability of messages sent through these channels. This uncontrollability makes many organizations doubt their ability to handle the channels, and therefore, many practitioners perceive that social media as less useful than traditional media for crisis communication. Although most public relations practitioners interviewed thought that social media could be fast and cost-effective for sending crisis messages, the speed of these channels could also be a disadvantage as negative news could spread quickly. Thus, it is expected that most Vietnamese practitioners perceive traditional media to be better, more useful and have more advantages than social media in crisis communication. Most practitioners said that organizations prefer to deny their crises and, when they decide to respond to stakeholders, use one-way communication. However, some practitioners expressed that traditional and social media should be used together in crisis communication. Those practitioners who doubted the use of social media for crisis communication also thought that more staff with specific experience in managing crises on these channels would be required.

Regarding the choice of crisis communication channels, the interview results showed that such choice depends partly on the channels that stakeholders use to communicate. The interview showed that Vietnamese public relations practitioners indeed think their stakeholders now seek and share news through social media except for older people and those who live in the country. Moreover, if a crisis were to start on social media, practitioners generally believe that stakeholders will pay even more attention to social media for updated information.

The results of the interview indicate that the choice in crisis communication channel is decided by a senior-level person (of an organization, a department or a team) after a team has discussed the possibility and approached the senior-level person. It is thus a bottom-up decision.

When social media is adopted for crisis communication process, the interview participants agreed that initially integrating social media into crisis communication activities takes minimal time and effort, but that to use these channels effectively takes more skill.

Finally, a last point worth noting is that when replying about social media use, the participants sometimes used the word “Facebook” to indicate what they thought about social media in general. Therefore, the researcher believes that Facebook is the most popular social media channel in Vietnam.

5.2. Proposal of Hypotheses for RQ1

To form hypotheses to test in a large-scale survey, this research combined the results of these interviews with public relations practitioners and with the reviewed literature and theories from chapters 2 and 3. Seven hypotheses were formed.

H1a. Organizations in Vietnam use traditional media channels more often than social media to communicate with stakeholders during crises.

Based upon the literature review and interview results, it is hypothesized that organizations in Vietnam use traditional media channels more frequently than social media channels to communicate with stakeholders during crises.

Two sub-hypotheses are also proposed for H1a that compare use of traditional and social media for crisis communication between in-house and agency public relations practitioners. It is believed that since agency practitioners have worked on more organizational crises, they will have greater experience with social media for crisis communication than in-house practitioners and will use these channels for such communication more frequently than in-house practitioners. As a corollary, it is believed that in-house practitioners are more conservative and therefore will be more likely to stay with traditional media channels for crisis communication. Greater agency than in-house use of social media for crisis communication would indicate that the innovation of using

social media for crisis communication is diffusing among Vietnamese organizations. Therefore, the following two sub-hypotheses are proposed for H1a:

- H1a1. In-house public relations practitioners are greater users of traditional media channels for crisis communication than agency practitioners.
- H1a2. Agency public relations practitioners are greater users of social media channels for crisis communication than in-house practitioners.

H1b. Among the social media channels used by companies and public relations practitioners in Vietnam, Facebook is used more often than others in crisis response.

With the omnipresence of Facebook, it is expected that Vietnamese organizations and public relations practitioners choose Facebook as the main social media channel for crisis response. This expectation agrees with the interview results. It is thus hypothesized that among the social media channels used by companies and public relations practitioners in Vietnam, Facebook is used more often than other social media channels in crisis response.

H1c. Organizations in Vietnam perceive that social media, when compared to traditional media has fewer advantages in crisis communication.

Considering the interview results in which public relations practitioners discussed both advantages and disadvantages of social media for crisis response, it is hypothesized that for internally-caused crises, social media has fewer relative advantages than traditional media such as the uncontrollability of negative news.

For this hypothesis, five sub-hypotheses are proposed. These sub-hypotheses follow the same reasoning as those for H1a, that in-house practitioners are more conservative in their choice of crisis communication channels and therefore, compared to agency practitioners, will express that messages on traditional media are easier to control, more appropriate, more professional, and more trustworthy than those on social media:

- H1c1. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication on traditional media is easier to control.
- H1c2. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication on traditional media is more appropriate.
- H1c3. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication on traditional media is more professional or official.
- H1c4. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication on traditional media is more appealing to target audiences.

- H1c5. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that people have more trust in crisis communication on traditional media.

H1d. Organizations in Vietnam think the majority of Vietnamese people seek and share crisis news on social media channels.

Since social media channels are highly popular in Vietnam, organizations will expect people to use these channels to look for and share all types of news including news about crises. Therefore, based on the interview results and reviewed literature, it is hypothesized that organizations in Vietnam think the majority of Vietnamese people seek and share crisis news on social media channels.

H1e. In Vietnamese organizations, a senior manager from the client, agency, or in-house is the one who decides whether to use social media in crisis response.

As discussed in chapter 3, in an organizational setting, there are three types of decisions regarding whether to adopt an innovation. These types are optional decision (made independently by an individual), collective decision (made together by a group of people) and authority decision (made by powerful individuals) (Rogers, 2003). As an organization is usually culturally bound, the decision-making process is influenced by the society's values. Hofstede (2001) proposed that a country's power distance and uncertainty avoidance values can direct an organization's functioning and innovation diffusion. Taken from this report, Vietnam scores high on the power distance index (70 points) and relatively low on the uncertainty avoidance index (30 points) ("What about Vietnam," n.d.). Based upon the interviews and the Hofstede scores, it is hypothesized that a senior manager makes the final decision on channels to be used in crisis response.

H1f. Organizations in Vietnam perceive that social media is less useful than traditional media in crisis response.

The interview (1a) showed that while most Vietnamese public relations practitioners and organizations appreciate some characteristics of social media, they doubt the overall usefulness of social media for crisis communication. Therefore, it is hypothesized that organizations in Vietnam perceive that social media is less useful than traditional media in crisis response. The dimensions to be examined in the following survey will include ease of communication, speed and cost-effectiveness, and overall usefulness of social media for crisis communication.

For this hypothesis, three sub-hypotheses are proposed in which the responses of agency and in-house practitioners are compared. For these sub-hypotheses, it is believed that since in-house practitioners have less experience in using social media for crisis response, they will have inflated belief in the ease, speed, and cost-effectiveness of communicating crises on social media as compared to traditional media:

- H1f1. In-house practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication is easier on social media than it is on traditional media.
- H1f2. In-house practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication is faster on social media than traditional media.
- H1f3. In-house practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication is more cost-effective on social media than traditional media.

H1g. Organizations in Vietnam think that adoption of social media in crisis response requires more effort than using traditional media in crisis response.

The researcher hypothesizes that Vietnamese practitioners and organizations think that the initial adoption of social media in crisis response requires more effort than as using traditional media for the same purpose.

These seven hypotheses will be tested with a large-scale survey of public relations practitioners, (survey 1b), and explored in more depth with a set of follow-up interviews with public relations practitioners, (interview 1c).

5.3. Results and Discussion of Interview (2a)

To review, the purpose of interview (2a) was to explore RQ2, which was what do Vietnamese stakeholders expect of an organization's crisis response on social media.

Interview (2a) was conducted with 13 organizational crisis stakeholders, who were six males and seven females from the working population in Vietnam who used social media and followed business news. The participants were of different age ranges: seven participants were under 25, five participants were from 25 to 34 years old, and two participants were 35 and above. All participants had lived and worked in Vietnam in the past five years. The participants were as follows:

Table 9

Participants of Interview (2a)

Code name	Gender	Age
2A	Male	23
2B	Male	22
2C	Male	25
2D	Female	22
2E	Female	26
2F	Female	23
2G	Female	25
2H	Female	24
2I	Female	26

2J	Female	25
2K	Male	24
2L	Male	65
2M	Male	37

In the interviews with stakeholders (2a), all participants used the term *crisis response* interchangeably with *crisis communication*, which might be because most stakeholders think crisis communication starts at the response phase. Comments from the stakeholder participants are organized in this section within the following three themes: (1) general perceptions of organizations' crisis response, (2) perceptions of organizations' use of traditional versus social media for crisis response, and (3) perceptions about social media for crisis response.

5.3.1. General perceptions of organizations' crisis response.

5.3.1.1. On reviewing the Tan Hiep Phat (THP) crisis: All participants doubted whether the company would have used social media effectively.

At the start of each interview, participants were asked to reflect on the THP crisis, a recent case as detailed in chapter 2. Similar to the public relations practitioners (group 1), the participants in group 2 were asked if they thought using social media to respond to stakeholders would have changed the situation or been effective. Three participants thought that social media should have been used while five participants replied that it should not have been used. All eight participants, however, said that even if THP had chosen to employ social media for its crisis response, they doubted whether THP would have been able to effectively handle the communication process:

Even if THP had chosen the right channel, wrong ways of communication would have led to more issues and the message wouldn't have satisfied the consumers. In this case, the company replied too late. Moreover, its reply didn't meet the public's expectations. We wanted an apology and goodwill, not an excuse or for THP to place blame elsewhere. If only the content had been different, social media would have been able to spread it more tactfully. – Participant 2I, female, 26 years old.

Participant 2G (female, 25 years old) provided an analysis of the different stakeholders that THP dealt with during the crisis, and how THP could have used social media to communicate with each of them:

To me, THP had three types of stakeholders: customers, internal staff and media. For the customers, if THP had used social media to respond, it would have eased the situation but it wouldn't have stopped the crisis. For urban customers, if THP had published a persuasive explanation on social media, it would have reduced negative judgments about THP.

However, some customers were from rural areas where other media are more commonly used, such as TV or radio, so social media wouldn't have worked... For the internal staff, social media could have helped calm them; however, an official statement is a must to allow people to access the truth. For the journalists, this would have worked, too, as it would have provided news and updates to journalists quickly.

Altogether, the participants stated that social media channels would not likely have improved the THP situation because of the organization's inability to use them or its lack of experience in crisis communication, and because of the limited reach of social media to key stakeholders. Further, regardless of the channels, a delay in response or poorly conveyed messages still would not have satisfied the stakeholders.

As stated by the participants, the message sent in a crisis is highly important and the channels is a secondary consideration. However, communicating at least something through social media in the case of THP might have eased some of the anger for those on social media. Moreover, the message needed to consist of an apology in which THP took blame for its actions.

5.3.1.2. Most stakeholder participants think that organizations should use social media for crisis response but should learn to use it effectively.

Participants were asked whether they expect organizations to use social media to respond during crises, to which nine of the 13 said "yes." Seven of the nine, however, suggested that although Vietnamese organizations should use social media in crisis communication, most do not use it properly. On the current use of social media in crisis communication in Vietnam, participants pointed out that Vietnamese organizations usually adopt social media to beg the crisis questions, question the authority of the whistleblowers, or try to delete negative comments. The participants felt that none of these actions were acceptable, and the actions could eventually harm the business:

Organizations are not used to using social media in crisis communication. In most cases, they are very slow to take action. They typically use traditional media to respond. When they use social media, they hire social media influencers to post statuses defending the responsible organization or appealing against the authority of people, reporters and news articles who opposed the company. These responses are too obvious and unacceptable. Even big companies in Vietnam are inexperienced in using social media or use it poorly. –

Participant 2E, female, 26 years old.

One common action companies use when they face a crisis is to delete the comments about the crisis or try to take down articles reporting the crisis. This is not a good way to handle the crisis because this doesn't ease people's concerns; instead, it just hides away some

crisis activities. People then become even more worried about what went wrong and what's going on. – Participant 2G, female, 25 years old.

None out of the 13 interviewees expressed that they had seen effective use of social media in crisis response. This perception agreed with ideas they expressed about the THP case. From a single case to a review of the bigger public relations landscape, the participants indicated that they did not think Vietnamese organizations respond wisely to crises, especially on social media. As participant 2I, a 26-year-old female, put it, stakeholders want “a response quickly” and “it doesn’t matter if the public is positive or negative about such a response because having a response shows that they are listening and care about those affected and the wider public”.

In general, participants think it unacceptable for organizations to delete comments or articles that reflect negatively on the organizations, to question those who speak out against the organizations, or to hire influencers to speak on the behalf of organizations. Participants also think it unacceptable for organizations to deny their crises. The removal of comments concerns people as such removal creates even greater uncertainty over what is happening, and the hiring of influencers makes organizations appear amateurish. Organizations apparently need more training on how to communicate crises on both traditional and social media as well as to better understand the ramifications of poorly handling or denying their crises.

5.3.1.3. Vietnamese stakeholders expect timely crisis responses.

When asked about preferences for a good crisis response, six participants picked the speed of response as their top priority:

Timing is the key for every crisis response. The sooner an organization responds, the better.
– Participant 2G, female, 25 years old.

Organizations need to react to negative feedback of customers. If a crisis happens, or is about to happen, stakeholders always expect some feedback or response from the organization... I believe quick responses and ability to meet customer expectation are key. – Participant 2I, female, 26 years old.

However, as one older participant noted, although the speed of response is important, the response must also be correct:

Fast responses with correct information are welcome. Organizations should not sacrifice accuracy or sincerity for speed. A crisis response must be timely, and it also must be trustworthy. – Participant 2L, male, 65 years old.

Participants generally agreed that if an organization makes an effort to take more timely and responsive actions, which could be on social media, the stakeholders would think the organization

“cares and shows responsibility,” and “skeptical stakeholders can be comforted,” as participant 2G, a 25-year-old female, put it.

In sum, not only do stakeholders expect a response that is timely, the response must be sincere and trustworthy. Stakeholders want to hear that organizations are taking responsibility for their actions and showing care for stakeholders. Nonetheless, stakeholders may not always receive such responses since organizational communication goals may differ from those of stakeholders.

5.3.1.4. Vietnamese stakeholders expect sincerity in crisis response content and actions.

In addition to the timeliness of response, four participants expressed that a good crisis response demonstrates sincerity in message content and action:

A good crisis response is a clear one that does not conceal information or avoid questions. –

Participant 2B, male, 22 years old.

Companies need to show their responsibility by investigating the root causes. If the fault belongs to the company, it should admit, apologize and try to resolve the problem. If the fault is external, the company needs to prove it by finding evidence. – Participant 2F, female, 23 years old.

Of course, there are many investigations or internal things a company must do beforehand... However, before sending out an official announcement, a company should give out its apology or explanation to the public. I think the customers can understand and accept your mistake if you admit your fault or know how to persuade them otherwise. –

Participant 2G, female, 25 years old.

Participant 2K (male, 24 years old) further explained that all crisis responses must be sincere, and stakeholders can be more supportive if they see a sincere response:

The effectiveness of crisis communication should be based on the fulfillment of stakeholders' expectations, business ethics and the company's communication goals. The message should reflect those goals. Sometimes, if a company receives too many criticisms, it will choose to apologize, hoping people will forgive it easily. And they may be more understanding and supportive. However, it's not just the communication message. In the end, if people don't see any actions from the company to solve the problem, or if the company's business ethics are still questionable, the crisis will continue and be even more severe. Thus, communication message is one thing, but the sincerity to be better is key to a good crisis response.

Another answer worth noting was from participant 2L (male, 65 years old), who had worked for the most prestigious newspaper in Vietnam for 40 years. Instead of stating his expectations for a

crisis response, he expressed that he does not expect anything anymore and showed his disappointment with most Vietnamese organizations' reactions during crises:

It's not likely that you will receive any reply or goodwill from the responsible companies. When a crisis happens, their first reaction is to close doors to reporters. Companies don't think they should reply in crises. Traditional media can barely get official information, and the same situation applies to social media. Thus, I don't expect any sincere responses at all, on any channel.

To summarize, the desire for a sincere response correlated with participants' opinions in the THP case, in which the participants mentioned that they would value the nature of response content and reaction more than the choice of media channels. Most Vietnamese stakeholders expect the involved organizations to show sincerity and responsibility, and not avoid or deny the issues. The statements of stakeholder participants also echo those of the practitioner participants in interview (1a) who said that organizations prefer to avoid responding and to deny their crises, even on traditional media. There is no law in the country that requires companies to respond to their mistakes. Therefore, even though stakeholders are looking for organizations to transparently admit to, apologize for, and resolve internal errors, organizations are not required to do so. Changes in the law that force companies to act ethically seem to be required to show care to stakeholders. Nonetheless, even without laws to protect stakeholders, organizations run the risk of having poor stakeholder relations when they do not respond as expected.

5.3.1.5. Vietnamese stakeholders think that silence during a crisis is irresponsible and untrustworthy.

The participants were asked what they thought about an organization if it did not respond to a crisis. All 13 participants considered an organization that stays silent during a crisis to be deceitful, irritating, irresponsible, untrustworthy or incapable. While smaller crises may eventually die down on their own, bigger crises require some response from the responsible organization. The participants stated that silence was not an option for response, that it could make the public spread the crisis information more uncontrollably:

In some cases, silence is gold. Companies choose not to respond publicly because the issue can be handled internally, or they can deal directly with the persons who raised the crisis. In fact, they don't ignore the crisis but they choose not to defend themselves on mass media because they know it can make the crisis look more serious. However, to the public, silence makes organizations appear irresponsible. – Participant 2E, female, 26 years old.
Silence is not gold in crisis communication. I feel like we are not respected by the organizations. – Participant 2M, male, 37 years old.

The participants were then asked to think why an organization might choose to remain silent. 12 out of 13 participants expressed that silence can only ease a crisis temporarily, but stakeholders can think negatively of an organization or insist on a response, especially during crises that start on social media:

Usually, if a responsible organization doesn't respond to anything about a crisis, information and maybe rumors will be spread more. However, netizens get excited easily and forget easily. They switch topics of concern rapidly. Therefore, if a company doesn't react and the crisis is small and not serious, in one or two days, the news can die down. However, staying silent just temporarily reduces the reach of the news and the stakeholders' concern is not addressed and the crisis can return any time. – Participant 2G, female, 25 years old.

There are some big companies with a fair amount of experience dealing with crises. They evaluate the issue and know it won't stay for long. They will choose to be silent. However, I feel that they are irresponsible and I will stop using their products or supporting them. – Participant 2H, female, 24 years old.

One participant mentioned that big organizations simply do not care about their stakeholders and do not see any urge to respond. Their lack of care is reflected in their silence:

Most organizations in Vietnam don't think responding to a crisis is their duty. They think they can control the traditional media, spin the stories to their benefit. For social media, if they can't control the story, they'll ignore it. – Participant 2L, male, 65 years old.

Nonetheless, all participants concluded that while the public may forget about a crisis over time, people directly affected by a crisis will not:

Of course, the ones who are affected by a crisis will not forget about it over time, despite silence or distractions. An organization can start another crisis any time. Businesses need customers, but customers do not need businesses. We don't beg for responses. If organizations don't reply, they fail to do business. – Participant 2M, 37 years old.

To summarize, in all crises, participants believed that a no-response reaction appears irresponsible and contemptuous of the stakeholders. This reaction cannot prevent the crisis from spreading uncontrollably and can also stain a company's image. As presented, one participant said that most organizations believe that they are not required to respond to crises that are started by stakeholders and that when organizations do respond, they prefer one-way communication through traditional media as it gives them control over the message. One participant also expressed that if organizations remain silent, even for small crises, they appear irresponsible and uncaring toward

stakeholders and run the risk that the crisis may return. Some stakeholders choose to boycott the products of organizations that neglect crisis response.

5.3.2. Perceptions about organizations' use of traditional versus social media for crisis response.

5.3.2.1. Vietnamese stakeholders highly appreciate crisis responses on traditional media.

The participants were also asked how they perceive organizations that make crisis responses on traditional media. All participants were favorable towards organizations that take such action. As news on traditional media must be verified or traceable, and reporters can ask more questions with unexpected angles, organizations that use traditional media demonstrate that they have planned for their crisis communication activities. Responding on traditional media shows that an organization has the confidence to face the crisis, handle it well and recover from it. Even though the end-result of a crisis also depends on an organization's goodwill and messages, by using traditional media, an organization can present an initial good image before its stakeholders:

I highly value a crisis response on traditional media. It shows that the organization knows how to manage a crisis by using the appropriate media. I suppose they can have my trust if they dare to use traditional media or a press conference to present their solutions. This indicates they are confident in their capability to face and recover from the issue. –

Participant 2C, male, 25 years old.

Vietnamese people think that news posted on traditional media, especially on the top-tier publications, is more or less trustworthy, even though we can't be sure of the sources' credibility. I believe among traditional media news, print news is better and more effective. This is the main channel for us to know about a crisis' development. – Participant 2G, female, 25 years old.

According to participant comments, stakeholders have greater trust in organizations that use press conferences with top-tier journalists present because stakeholders can see organizational representatives facing unknown questions from the journalists. When an organization faces the press in a live situation, stakeholders think that the organization is confident in handling its crisis. Stakeholders also appreciate responses in top-level print publications as such reporting makes an organization appear more trustworthy.

5.3.2.2. Most Vietnamese stakeholders seek crisis information on traditional media, thinking social media is unreliable.

As expressed by participants, traditional media are not only preferred channels for receiving organizational responses, but also frequent sources of news to which they turn for information and support during crises. By sources and news, the participants explained that it can be news from the

responsible organization, involved or affected stakeholders, or members of the general public who pay attention to the crisis. In all cases, the participants explained that traditional media are the main channels they rely on when there is a crisis with which they are involved or care about.

Initially, all participants indicated no preference for a single media channel and replied that they seek news from a combination of sources, including traditional media, social media, family, friends and word-of-mouth. The researcher further asked which of the mentioned sources they preferred or trusted the most. In response, the participants expressed that they may not have a clear preference of which source to trust, but they generally do not trust information on social media. They only think of these channels as references to be cross-checked. No matter which channel they preferred, all participants were fully aware that social media information may be incorrect, biased or unverifiable.

In more detail, ten out of 13 participants said that traditional media channels were their preferred information channels:

I prefer to read newspapers and watch TV rather than social media. I use reliable online news sources like Tuoi Tre, Thanh Nien or a foreign news source like the BBC. I assume that when information is published on traditional media, the publications will be more cautious with the words and sources because they are responsible for the stories. Therefore, the credibility is higher. – Participant 2C, male, 25 years old.

I only use Facebook to see what my friends and relatives say about an issue, or what traditional media articles they share on their Facebook pages. I also go to traditional news pages for official information... There are multiple social media groups that provide quicker and more detailed information than traditional news. I can use them to know about an issue but still need to find another source to confirm it. – Participant 2M, male, 37 years old.

Five out of these ten participants who preferred traditional media specifically mentioned that the news articles can be found in print and online, and can be shared through social media. As they use social media frequently, it is more likely that they encounter traditional media articles on social media channels instead of on a news website or print news. Nonetheless, for most people, it is the author and publication agency that determine the credibility of a news piece, not the channels on which it appears:

I prefer the print and online version of traditional news, especially the online one. Online news is less censored by the government, and it can be shared through social media to reach me faster. – Participant 2E, female, 26 years old.

I rarely read traditional news on the news websites or in print. I use Facebook instead, but I look for trustworthy sources like an internal staff of an organization discussing an issue, or

information shared from a prestigious news agency. I think I can select the more credible information on social media. – Participant 2I, female, 26 years old.

To emphasize their viewpoint on a preferred communication channel during crises, three participants stated that organizations should not use social media in crises. Moreover, if a crisis started on social media, these participants said that it would be better if the organization stayed away from that channel:

I don't think social media channels are good tools to use in crisis response. Organizations only use social media to manipulate information and hide the truth in order to save the company's reputation and avoid a crisis. However, such actions would eventually harm the business. – Participant 2C, male, 25 years old.

I don't think organizations should use social media channels as tools to communicate in crisis because social media contain many different and negative flows of information. Responses from organizations can be overwhelmed by the negative information or misinterpreted in a bad way. Instead of using social media, I suggest companies make official announcements on the press or radio since they are more reliable. From there, their audiences can help them spread the official news on social media and minimize complicated incorrect information. – Participant 2D, female, 22 years old.

The interview results showed that while the participants think that social media channels are somewhat convenient, they prefer traditional media for communication of crisis information. Content on social media was generally considered to be unreliable and to lack credibility. Participants expressed that they generally do not trust information on social media channels, with an exception of traditional media news being shared on social media. Some participants suggested that organizations not use social media in their crisis communication plans.

Many of the participants did express, however, that they read traditional news pieces that are posted in social media. Therefore, it is not the channel itself that is untrustworthy but the message source, or writer and publication agency. It appears that organizational crisis messages need to be filtered through traditional media for most stakeholders to perceive them as trustworthy. An organization that only uses social media for crisis communication could seem deceptive.

5.3.3. Some Vietnamese stakeholders consider social media as a place for information reference.

5.3.3.1. Some Vietnamese stakeholders consider social media as a place for information reference.

Only three of the 13 participants replied that social media were their preferred channels to gather crisis information, although they were aware that information on these channels might be

incorrect. These participants used social media stories as points of reference for beginning to learn about a crisis:

If a crisis is relevant to me, I would not only look for information from friends or online communities but actively check on the fan page of the responsible organization for official updates. – Participant 2H, female, 24 years old.

I usually know about a crisis through friends or social media. I know the links shared on social media may be inaccurate, but they are convenient. – Participant 2G, female, 25 years old.

Despite having certain preferred channels or pages, all participants indicated that Vietnamese people do not have any news sources that are completely unbiased and trustworthy. Participants expressed that Vietnamese traditional media may have their own agendas and do not report all the facts. Thus, social media could be a solution for information reference:

I use social media information for reference only and often cross check with other sources to evaluate its credibility. Cross-checking is a must because I believe there is no single source or page that's 100% trustworthy in Vietnam. – Participant 2G, female, 25 years old.

Another participant's opinion was that the social media channels give people the opportunity for open communication, as opposed to traditional media, which are controlled and censored by the government. This participant expressed that Vietnamese people turn to social media for straight and transparent information:

Mass communication in Vietnam doesn't enjoy press freedom. Traditional media outlets are controlled by the government or bought by big companies; their information is well-censored, restricted or biased. Therefore, people go online and rely on social media for news. Social media has grown fast and strong, making itself the main channel for uncensored and unrestricted information... Social media is fast, straight and transparent, but it's not always objective and accurate... We have to use our judgment. – Participant 2L, male, 65 years old.

In summary, further to the notion that traditional media channels are used more frequently for crisis information, some participants expressed that they still use social media to some extent. Some stakeholders rely on social media stories as points of reference. Since there is no unbiased news in Vietnam and traditional news outlets are government censored, social media channels allow for more transparent reporting of crises even though some sources may be unreliable. As participants expressed, social media channels help people become aware of crises that might otherwise be hidden or that they might not hear about through traditional outlets. However, if people use information on social media channels, the information must be double-checked. As in

many other countries, people need to use a range of sources to learn the truth about a crisis since many sources are biased.

5.3.3.2. Some Vietnamese stakeholders expect crises that begin on social media to be managed on social media.

To delve more deeply into the stakeholders' perception of crisis information on social media, the researcher asked participants whether when a crisis started on social media, they would try to find updates on the same social media channel and would expect the responsible organization to respond on that same channel. Five of the 13 participants expected such organizations to use the same social media channel to respond since they thought immediate responses on a single channel could help contain the crisis better:

If a crisis happens on a particular channel of social media, I suggest the organization uses that same channel to end it. There are times when a crisis happens on one channel while the other channels are running well. In these cases, it is not necessary to bring the problem to all channels. If they use different channels to explain the problem, they only spread it more widely. – Participant 2J, female, 25 years old.

I think if the issue is small, we should keep it low. We should also end it professionally... We can make a formal apology on social media to those involved and also those who started the issue and the story can end right there. – Participant 2H, female, 24 years old.

Another opinion from participants was that if a crisis started on social media, the responsible organization should not only reply on that very channel but on all social media channels available. One reason given was that the original source of a crisis can easily be shared on other channels, thus the crisis communicators must oversee all social media channels at once, not just a forum or page on which a crisis began:

In this era, social media channels are interconnected. Information on one social media channel will be carried on other channels in no time. I expect to see the problem solved within one or two days, and feel pleased if this happens... The most effective crisis management is to solve the problem on every social media channel because once the crisis breaks out on one channel, it is posted, and may be twisted, on other channels as well. – Participant 2G, female, 25 years old.

For small crises that started on social media and that could be quickly and easily handled on these channels, some participants thought that organizations should respond on the same channel on which a crisis began. One participant thought that it was enough to handle a small crisis on just the social media channel on which the crisis began while another expressed that the crisis response should appear on all social media channels as they are all connected. To reach all stakeholders and

demonstrate transparency, the multi-channel approach would be more effective. However, such an approach could spread information about a crisis, which not every organization might want.

5.3.3.3. Vietnamese stakeholders have conflicting perceptions regarding an organization's choice to respond on social media first.

The participants were asked what they would think about an organization that responded to a crisis on social media first, before responding on traditional media. The purpose of this question was to delve deeper into the result from the previous question, that many stakeholders expect a crisis response on the same social media channel in which a crisis begins. The lingering problem is that if an organization relies solely on social media to respond, and if a crisis did not start on social media, would the stakeholders' perceptions be different.

The question was also different from the earlier question of this survey about the preferred information channel to use during crises. The earlier question focused on information from any party, while the later questions referred to responses from the responsible organizations only. The researcher explained that although participants may trust or prefer one channel over another, the questions asked how they think about organizations, not channels. The researcher further noted to the participants that even though an organization may use two or more channels to communicate, the participants only needed to think about their opinions on the main communication channel used.

The replies were mixed. Six participants thought it was a bad decision to respond on social media, while the other six supported it. Four participants asserted that by using social media first, an organization would appear to be delaying the official response, distracting stakeholders with false information or misleading influencers (as participant 2E mentioned in the first question). Overall, these participants considered organizations that use social media in this way to be inefficient in crisis communication:

A company looks more professional when it uses traditional media. A response on social media is not trustworthy and powerful enough to us. Social media channels are more like tools to access consumers' reactions. They are not widely used for official announcements. The announcements should be on the company's website or traditional media. – Participant 2F, female, 23 years old.

Responding on social media can cause the information to spread quickly. However, I don't think the readers believe this kind of information. They'd consider online information less serious or fabricated. – Participant 2G, female, 25 years old.

In contrast, four other participants answered that a response on social media would be at least better than no response. These participants expressed that although a social media response

may seem unofficial, it shows an organization's attention to a crisis and willingness to engage in dialogue:

When using social media, an organization shows that it cares for and is ready to resolve the crisis thoroughly, and I guess it would gain public sympathy and support. – Participant 2B, male, 22 years old.

I think having a response is good, no matter which media it is on. Moreover, usually after a response is posted on social media, it will spread quickly and will be picked up by traditional media. All news agencies now use social media as a source. So, by replying on social media, an organization actually indirectly gives its comment to the press. –

Participant 2I, female, 26 years old.

To summarize, from the interview results, while some participants thought positively of an organization responding on social media first, others did not and preferred organizations to use traditional media.

Those who supported the use of social media for an initial response said that it was better to respond through social media than not at all, that using social media demonstrated an organization's willingness to communicate with stakeholders, that use of social media could help an organization gain sympathy and support, and that an organization's post on social media would be picked up by traditional media anyway so the story would eventually appear on traditional media, too. Therefore, for some participants, the initial channel used did not matter. Those participants who were against using social media for an initial response said that organizations that responded in this way might appear to be delaying their initial response and would look unprofessional and untrustworthy. The participants said that social media should only be used by organizations to review stakeholder reactions. For these participants, social media are best used for listening through all three stages of crisis management.

5.3.3.4. A combined use of social media and traditional media in crisis response is expected.

As participants discussed the different communication channels that they used, they each agreed that no single channel is completely trusted or favored. Three participants reflected that a wise use of communication channels contributes to a good crisis response. By "a wise use of communication channels," the participants explained that the crisis communicators should analyze which channels would reach their target audiences most effectively and limit unnecessary information spread:

If a crisis response that is well-prepared and sincere cannot reach the target audiences, these people cannot be aware of how serious the company is about a crisis, and what the

company will do next. When a crisis is spread out, the best solution is to consider which channels are most frequently used by the target audiences and stakeholders. If your targets use Facebook, then Facebook is the best channel, and if they use forums, forums are your best choice. The same goes with print news or radio. – Participant 2A, male, 23 years old. I think we need to use all possible media channels to solve customers' concerns. However, since social media is such an easy channel for people to voice their opinions or to spread a certain concern more widely, a problem might be exaggerated. Sometimes a problem or a potential crisis is not as serious as it appears online. If a problem is small, we don't need to involve mass media at all. A meeting or direct discussion between the two involved parties should be enough. – Participant 2E, female, 26 years old.

All 13 participants in interview (2a) mentioned that social media alone cannot make a good response for the reasons previously discussed. Target audiences drive the chosen channels. Participants expressed that social media must be used together with other communication tools to reach all stakeholder groups and to maximize the credibility and effectiveness of the crisis management plan:

Organizations need to use a variety of communication channels. – Participant 2F, female, 23 years old.

I don't think a company should spend time replying or arguing on social media though, as it is impossible to silence the netizens. Social media can be used to... plan a response for the company crisis. Then, traditional media can be used to publish official responses. – Participant 2D, female, 22 years old.

Five participants emphasized the value of responding across both online and offline channels. They thought that if an organization only replies online, the statement would seem unofficial and less credible. Moreover, although they could sympathize with an organization responding quickly and directly on social media, they thought it would be unprofessional and somewhat awful if an organization avoids the press and does not appear on traditional media:

When using social media to respond directly and immediately, organizations show that they care about a crisis and are willing to resolve it. I guess they will gain the public's sympathy. However, if an organization only responds on social media, I'd think that they're hiding something and don't want to meet the press. It can make things worse. Therefore, I suggest using both social media and traditional media. But in terms of traditional media, I want to add that I rarely read print news so I think online news is necessary. So, a mix of online and offline tools is necessary. – Participant 2C, male, 25 years old.

A response on social media is only the company's voice. Customers tend to dislike a company's own praise. It looks unprofessional and one-sided. People nowadays prefer information from multiple perspectives. – Participant 2K, male, 24 years old.

Some participants also expressed that stakeholders who start or follow a crisis on social media may not be members of a stakeholder group prioritized by the organization's business. Therefore, while people may expect a crisis response on social media, an organization may choose traditional media or another more direct channel to communicate with its main stakeholders:

An example was in the THP crisis. One main consumer group of THP was in rural areas and with little use of social media. A crisis response on the originating social media channel would not have reached them. – Participant 2A, male, 23 years old.

In summary, participants stated that Vietnamese stakeholders expect a combined use of social media and traditional media, as well as telephone and face-to-face meetings, in crisis response. The combination is believed to create a better reach to all target audiences and overcome the shortcomings of each platform.

As participants preferred or trusted no single media channel or source, they thought organizations should use multiple channels to reach their target audiences. Using social media alone was perceived to be a problem as responses on these channels could cause organizational problems to be exaggerated by the many people posting comments. Also, if an organization discussed its problem using only its own voice, the organization might appear to be hiding its actions. Organizations would appear more trustworthy if they used traditional media. One participant suggested that organizations could use social media to find stakeholder problems and then handle these problems offline.

5.4. Proposal of Hypotheses for RQ2

To review, the second research question (RQ2) is “What do Vietnamese stakeholders expect of an organizational crisis response that appears on social media channels?” After analyzing the results of interview (2a) and considering the reviewed literature and theories from chapters 2 and 3, the research proposes the following hypotheses to test with a large-scale survey of stakeholders.

H2a. When a crisis begins, most Vietnamese stakeholders expect organizations to communicate responsively on social media rather than requiring them to wait for information on traditional media.

In this research, to communicate responsively means to communicate quickly, frequently, and directly with stakeholders. In the survey conducted with stakeholder participants, six of the 13 said that organizations should respond quickly to a crisis. A quick response is more possible on social media and could be given in addition to a response on traditional media.

In addition, based upon the literature review, one of the basic principles of effective crisis communication is providing stakeholders with accurate, timely, consistent and relevant information (Coombs, 2014). Coombs further noted that if an organization provides stakeholders with frequent information about a crisis, stakeholders can feel assured and less likely to have impractical expectations. Therefore, it is expected that Vietnamese stakeholders would appreciate timely and frequent responses on social media channels. The results of interview (2a) somewhat support these ideas.

Therefore, it is hypothesized that during crises, stakeholders expect organizations to communicate responsively on social media rather than making them wait for information on traditional media.

For H2a, two sub-hypotheses are also proposed that compare the preferences of younger and older stakeholders for crisis communication on social versus traditional media. It is believed that since younger stakeholders have more experience than older stakeholders with social media, younger stakeholders will prefer receiving a quick and direct response on social media to waiting for an official and carefully crafted response on traditional media. As a corollary, it is believed that since older stakeholders are generally more conservative and have less experience with social media, they will prefer receiving official and carefully crafted crisis information on traditional media to quick and direct information on social media. Therefore, the two sub-hypotheses are:

- H2a1. Compared to younger stakeholders, older stakeholders have greater preference for receiving official and carefully crafted crisis information on traditional media.
- H2a2. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders have greater preference for receiving quick and direct crisis information on social media.

H2b. Most Vietnamese stakeholders have low trust and appreciation for crisis information shared on social media channels compared to such information shared on traditional channels.

In this study, trust refers to stakeholders' opinions of the credibility of a channel while appreciation refers to people's liking of fast and convenient channels compared to those that are slower and less convenient. In the stakeholder interview portion of this study, most people expressed the belief that crisis information shared by organizations on social media is unreliable compared to crisis information shared on traditional media. Therefore, hypothesis H2b aims to test whether this belief holds for the larger population and whether stakeholders from different age groups hold differing opinions. It also aims to test whether stakeholders appreciate the speed and convenience aspects of social media compared to traditional media for crisis response.

For hypothesis H2b, nine sub-hypotheses are proposed that consider aspects of “trust and appreciation” for the two different communication channels, which are the credibility, quickness, and convenience of these channels. For each of these aspects, perceptions of younger and older stakeholders will be compared. It is believed that compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly agree that social media channels are credible, quick, and convenient for crisis communication. The nine sub-hypotheses are as follows:

- H2b1. Stakeholders believe that traditional media is more credible than social media for sharing crisis information.
- H2b2. Compared to younger stakeholders, older stakeholders will rate the credibility of traditional media more highly than social media for sharing crisis information.
- H2b3. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will rate the credibility of social media more highly than traditional media for sharing crisis information.
- H2b4. Stakeholders think social media is quicker than traditional media for crisis communication.
- H2b5. Compared to younger stakeholders, older stakeholders will rate the quickness of traditional media more highly for sharing crisis information.
- H2b6. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will rate the quickness of social media more highly for sharing crisis information.
- H2b7. Stakeholders think social media is more convenient than traditional media for sharing crisis information.
- H2b8. Compared to younger stakeholders, older stakeholders will more strongly agree that traditional media are convenient for sharing crisis information.
- H2b9. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly agree that social media are convenient for sharing crisis information.

H2c. When a crisis starts on a social media channel, most Vietnamese stakeholders expect organizations to respond on that channel.

In interview (2a) with the stakeholders, only five out of 13 participants thought an organization should respond on the social media channel on which the crisis started. These participants stated that an organization should respond on the same social media channel on which a crisis started only if the main target audience of the organization frequents that channel. Moreover, they expressed that a crisis response is more appreciated if, besides appearing on the originating social media channel, it also appears on other social media channels and traditional media channels.

Chapter 2 discussed that one of the social media rules of crisis communication is to be where the action is (Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Pursuit, 2013). According to these scholars, an organization should respond to a crisis on the same channel on which the crisis started. If a crisis starts on social media, it means that the stakeholders are using this particular platform and they will scan this platform frequently for organizational responses. An organization can be viewed negatively if it ignores the social media channel where the crisis started (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). From the above literature findings, in times of crisis, it is hypothesized that Vietnamese stakeholders expect organizations to respond on the same social media channels on which a crisis started.

For this hypothesis, four sub-hypotheses are proposed that first test whether stakeholders prefer crisis response to be on traditional media versus social media and then test the preferences of younger versus older stakeholders for a response on traditional versus social media. The fourth sub-hypothesis tests whether younger stakeholders compared to older stakeholders more strongly agree that organizations should respond on the same social media channel on which a crisis started. The four sub-hypotheses are as follows:

- H2c1. Stakeholders prefer a crisis response to be on traditional media compared to social media.
- H2c2. Older stakeholders prefer crisis communication to be on traditional media.
- H2c3. Younger stakeholders prefer crisis communication to be on social media.
- H2c4. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly agree that organizations should respond on the same social media channel on which a crisis started.

H2d. In Vietnam, when an organization responds to a crisis on social media, most stakeholders will perceive the organization to be sincere, caring, and willing to engage in dialogue.

Results of interview (2a) indicate that it is best for organizations to use both traditional and social media because they each have advantages and disadvantages. A combination of media both maximizes communication efficiency and creates a good impression for the stakeholders. The interviews showed that half of the participants thought it would be a poor decision to respond on social media, while the other half thought it would be a positive decision. Nonetheless, all participants expressed that a personalized crisis response on social media was warmly welcomed and would make organizations more appreciated.

From the reviewed literature, Schultz et al. (2011) assessed the influences on organizational reputation during crises and concluded that the choice of medium matters more than the message on an organization's reputation. These researchers found that responding on social media can lead to a higher organizational reputation than communication on traditional media. Based on NCCT, the researcher expects that in Vietnam, crisis response on social media will lead to most stakeholders perceiving an organization to be sincere, caring, and willing to engage in dialogue.

As mentioned in chapter 2 on organizational reputation, Fombrun (1996) described it as stakeholders' assessment of an organization's capability to meet their expectations. The reviewed literature said that to meet stakeholder expectations and build organizational reputation, the most influential factors were open dialogue, good communication, and building trust and a positive attitude toward consumers (Fombrun et al., 2000; Walsh, Beatty & Shiu, 2009). Podnar (2015) also determined that the main driver to evaluate organizational reputation is open dialogue to help build trust and respect between an organization and its stakeholders.

It is therefore hypothesized that in Vietnam, crisis response on social media leads most stakeholders to positively evaluate an organization. Based on the suggestions above, to examine how Vietnamese stakeholders evaluate an organization, the survey will assess the respondents' perception of an organization's sincerity, level of caring and willingness to have a dialogue with stakeholders if the organization uses social media.

For this hypothesis, three sub-hypotheses are proposed that compare the responses of younger and older stakeholders to each of the ideas that organizations using social media for crisis response are more sincere, caring, and willing to engage in dialogue. The three sub-hypotheses are as follows:

- H2d1. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly perceive that organizations using social media for crisis response are more sincere.
- H2d2. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly perceive that organizations using social media for crisis response are more caring.
- H2d3. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly perceive that organizations using social media for crisis response are more willing to engage in dialogue.

H2e. In Vietnam, most stakeholders believe that if an organization responds to crises on social media, they would not talk badly about or boycott the organization, and they would support the organization after the crisis.

This last hypothesis is based on NCCT's assessment of the communication medium. In the original study of NCCT by Schultz et al. (2011), participants who received crisis information from a

newspaper tended to share or speak about the crisis more often, and were more likely to talk badly or boycott an organization, compared to those who read information on Twitter and Facebook (Schultz et al., 2011; Utz et al., 2013). The NCCT researchers concluded that the choice of media through which crisis messages are sent is important and should be considered when designing a crisis communication strategy. From these notions, Utz and colleagues (2013) explained that a crisis response on social media meets stakeholders' expectations of timely and accurate information. Thus, stakeholders are less likely to engage in secondary crisis reactions, such as talking badly about an organization or boycotting it, and an organization's reputation can be upheld. Accordingly, it is expected that Vietnamese stakeholders will state that if an organization responds on social media, they will neither speak badly about nor boycott the organization, and will support it after the crisis.

This last hypothesis contains two sub-hypotheses that compare younger and older stakeholders' responses to the ideas that they would not talk about or boycott an organization if it used social media for crisis response and that the stakeholders would support the organization if it used social media for that purpose. The two sub-hypotheses are as follows:

- H2e1. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will be more likely to stop sharing bad news or talking badly about an organization if it uses social media for crisis response.
- H2e2. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will be more likely to support an organization if it uses social media for crisis response.

Chapter 6: Phase 2 – Results of Quantitative Surveys (1b) and (2b)

This chapter examines the results of survey (1b) with public relations practitioners and survey (2b) with stakeholders. Results of survey (1b) are compared with the theories of Rogers' DOI and Hofstede's dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance and the reviewed literature. Results of survey (2b) are compared with NCCT as well as the reviewed literature. From the results, conclusions are made regarding the proposed hypotheses to check whether the results suggest a confirmation or a rejection of the hypotheses. This chapter also discusses themes arising from the open-ended sections of the surveys to see what respondents think about the usefulness of social media in crisis communication.

6.1. Survey (1b) with Vietnamese Public Relations Practitioners

To review, the first research question (RQ1) is "How do organizations and public relations practitioners in Vietnam perceive the use of social media channels to communicate with stakeholders during crises?" Survey (1b) with public relations practitioners was used to test the seven hypotheses as well as sub-hypotheses developed in chapter 5 using DOI and Hofstede's dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance. As comparisons between traditional and social media were objectives of this research, the *p* value for statistical significance between these channels is always presented. Comparisons are also made between the responses of agency and in-house public relations practitioners, but the *p* value is presented only when results are significant. Unless noted otherwise, the paired Wilcoxon was used to test for differences in scores between traditional media and social media, and between agency and in-house responses. Detailed results of the survey are presented in the appendices. All but the open-ended questions were mandatory and could not be skipped.

Respondents in survey (1b) were 50 public relations practitioners in Vietnam. Their ages ranged from 22 to 46 (mean: 28, standard deviation: 5.3). The respondents were 36.0% male (N=18) and 64.0% female (N=32). The respondents had a wide range of experience and were a good mix of agency and in-house practitioners. Of the respondents, 52% (N= 26) had two to five years of experience, 30% (N=15) had six to eight years, 18% (N=9) had nine or more years of experience, 36% (N=18) were working in an agency and 64% (N=32) were working in an in-house communication department. Figure 3 presents the experience range of the respondents while figure 4 presents the percentage working in an agency or in-house.

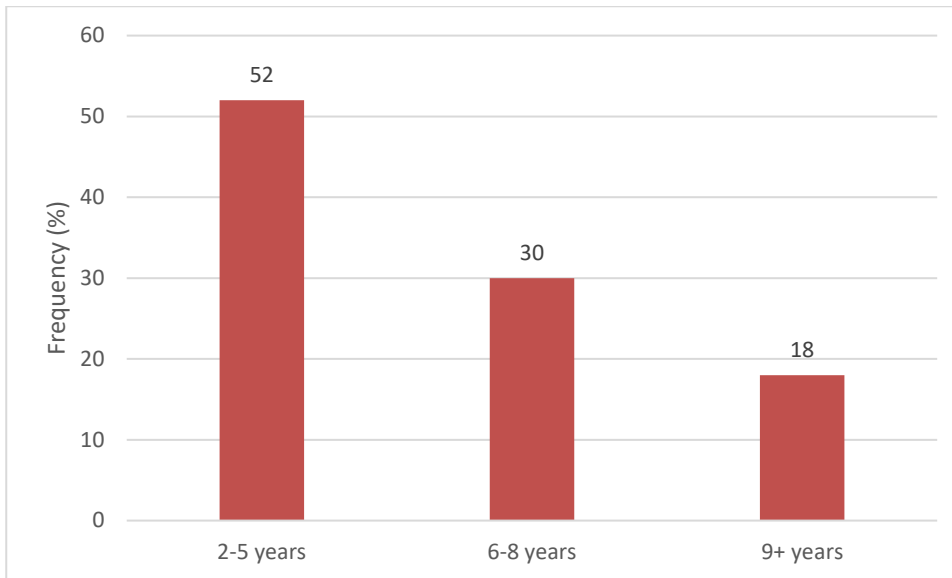


Figure 3. Experience range of survey (1b) respondents.

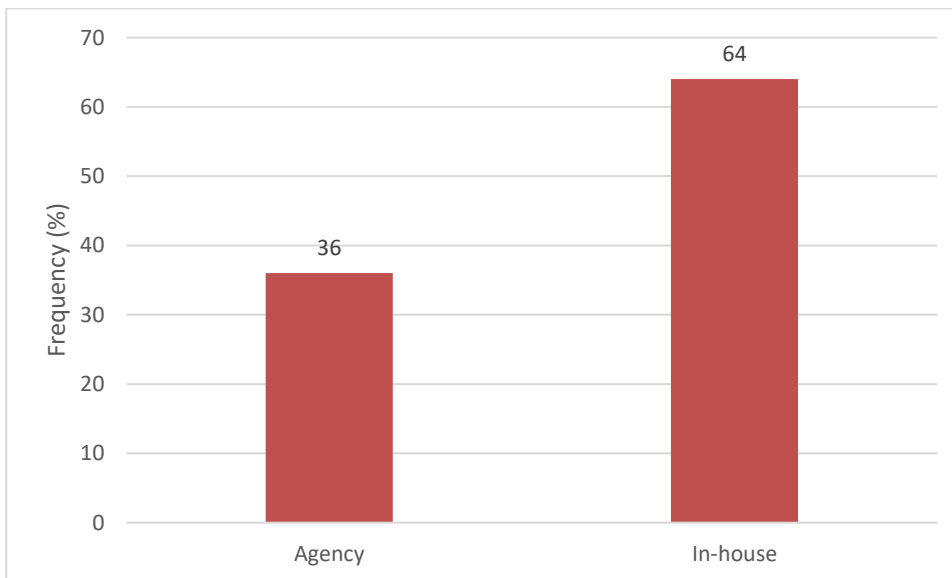


Figure 4. Current workplaces of survey (1b) respondents.

6.1.1. Vietnamese organizations use traditional and social media roughly equally for crisis response.

Questions 1 and 2 of the survey were used to test H1a, which was that organizations in Vietnam use traditional media channels more often than social media to communicate with stakeholders during crises. As will be discussed, H1a was rejected since practitioners altogether reported that their organizations use both sets of channels roughly equally for crisis response. Of interest, however, agency practitioners said that they use social media channels more often for crisis response than do in-house practitioners. This result, although statistically insignificant, may indicate

that agency practitioners are leading the way in the use of social media channels for crisis communication and that the practice is indeed diffusing.

In more detail, question 1 asked respondents how often their organizations used traditional media (media conferences and media releases) to communicate about crises while Question 2 asked how often their organizations used social media to communicate. Respondents were asked on a scale of 0-2 (0: Never, 1: Occasionally, 2: Always). A paired Wilcoxon test was used to evaluate differences in the usage. Results were first compared among respondents overall and then compared between agency and in-house practitioners as per sub-hypotheses H1a1 and H1a2, which are reviewed below. Figure 5 presents the frequencies of organizations' use of each channel type for crisis communication purposes.

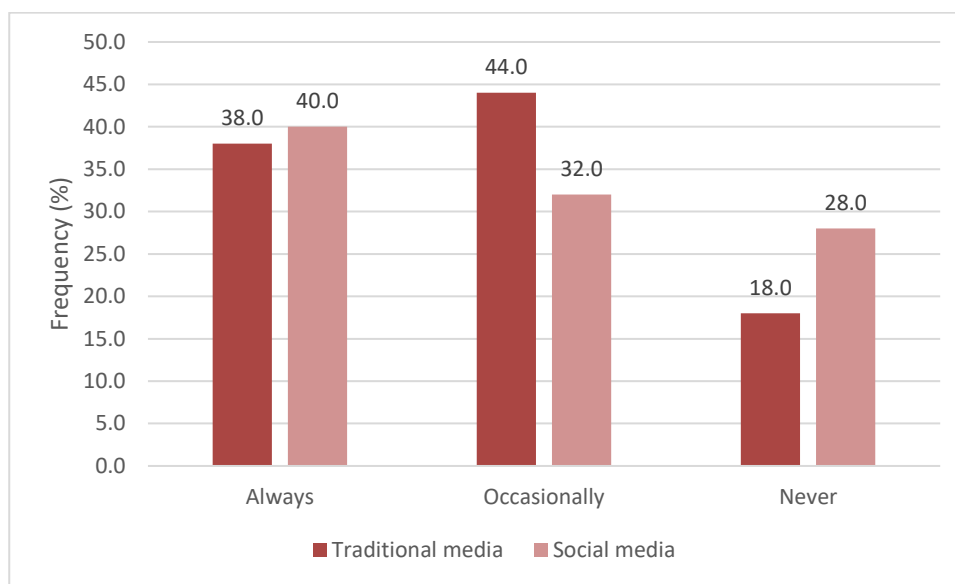


Figure 5. Frequencies of organizational use of traditional media and social media in crisis communication.

The overall results for H1a indicate very similar choices of traditional media and social media for crisis communication across all respondents' organizations. As shown, 82% answered that their organization uses traditional media in crisis communication at least some of the time, and 72% answered that their organization uses social media at least some of the time. The difference in their use of traditional or social media was not statistically significant ($p = 0.661$).

H1a is rejected.

Next, figure 6 compares the use of traditional media between agency and in-house respondents as per H1a1, and figure 7 compares the use of social media between these two groups of respondents as per H1a2. To review, H1a1 posited that in-house public relations practitioners are

greater users of traditional media channels for crisis communication than agency practitioners. As a corollary, H1a2 posited that agency public relations practitioners are greater users of social media channels for crisis communication than in-house practitioners.

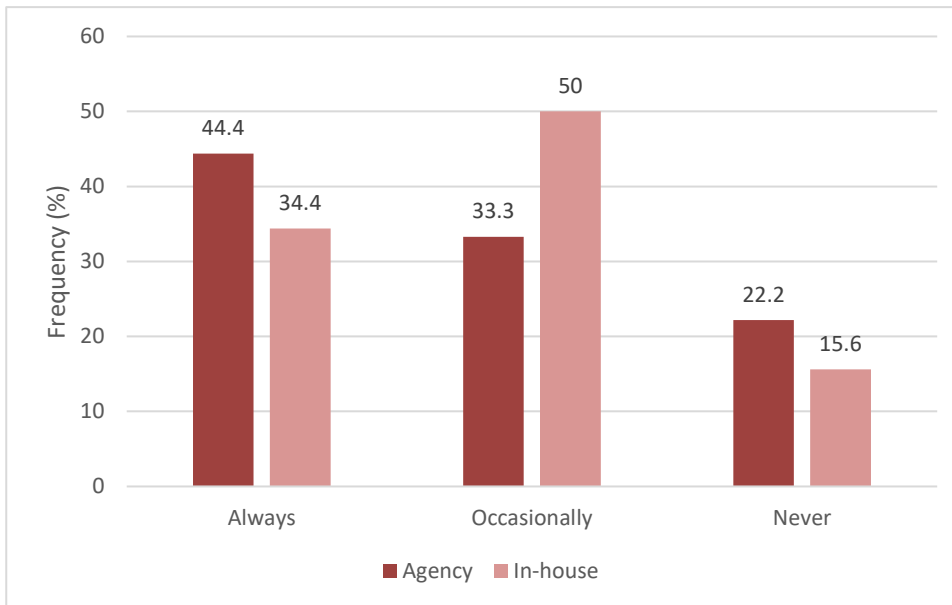


Figure 6. Frequencies of agency versus in-house use of traditional media in crisis communication.

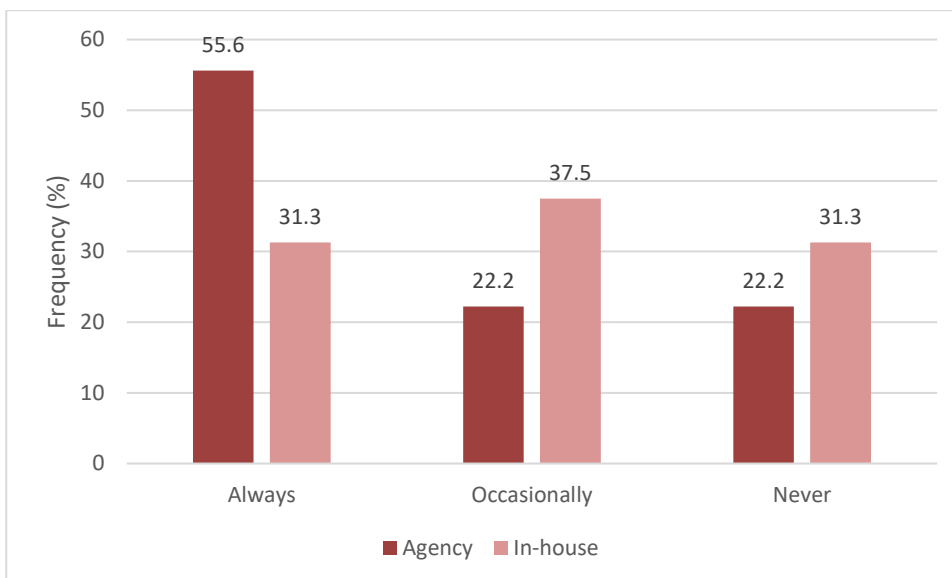


Figure 7. Frequencies of agency versus in-house use of social media for crisis communication.

The results between agency and in-house respondents were quite similar in their use of traditional media for crisis communication: 77.8% of agency respondents and 84.4% of in-house respondents answered that their organizations at least occasionally use traditional media for this purpose. Nonetheless, agency respondents showed a greater commitment than in-house respondents

to using traditional media: 44.4% of agency respondents answered that their organizations always use media conferences and releases (traditional media tools) in crisis communication, while the most frequent answer of in-house respondents was that their organizations occasionally use traditional media tools (50%).

Figure 7 presents that agencies use social media more frequently (77.8%) than their in-house counterparts (68.8%). While 55.6% of agency respondents mentioned that they always use social media in crisis communication, only 31.3% of in-house respondents answered that they always use it. Noticeably, 31.3% of in-house respondents answered that their organizations never use social media in crisis communication activities. Even though there is no statistical difference between agency and in-house practitioners' use of social media for crisis communication, the greater use of these channels for crisis communication by agencies may indicate that this practice is diffusing in Vietnam as mentioned earlier and that agencies may be acting as the leaders in adopting social media for crisis communication. Also, the fact that both agency and in-house practitioners are using social media for crisis communication demonstrates that the practice is diffusing.

Comparing the results in figures 6 and 7, agency respondents used a comparable amount of traditional media (through media conferences and releases) and social media for crisis communication: 77.8% had at least occasionally used traditional media during crises, and the same percentage had at least occasionally used social media. The difference among respondents in overall preferences between traditional and social media use during crisis was not statistically significant ($p = 0.778$).

On the other hand, the in-house respondents indicated a more frequent use of traditional media, with 84.4% of the respondents answering that their organizations at least occasionally use traditional media during crises, compared with social media at 68.8%. However, the difference among respondents in overall preferences during crises was not statistically significant either ($p = 0.253$). As stated, both H1a1 and H1a2 are rejected.

6.1.2. When Vietnamese organizations use social media for crisis response, they favor using two or more channels simultaneously but use Facebook most often.

Questions 3-6 aimed to discover which social media channels organizations use most often and whether they use a combination of channels. These questions were used to test H1b, which was that among the social media channels used by companies and public relations practitioners in Vietnam, Facebook is used more often in crisis response. As will be discussed, results found that when organizations use social media for crisis response, most tend to use two or more channels simultaneously. Of all channels, however, Facebook is used most frequently. Again, these results

show that the practice of using social media for crisis communication is diffusing in the country. The results of the number of channels used are presented in figure 8 below.

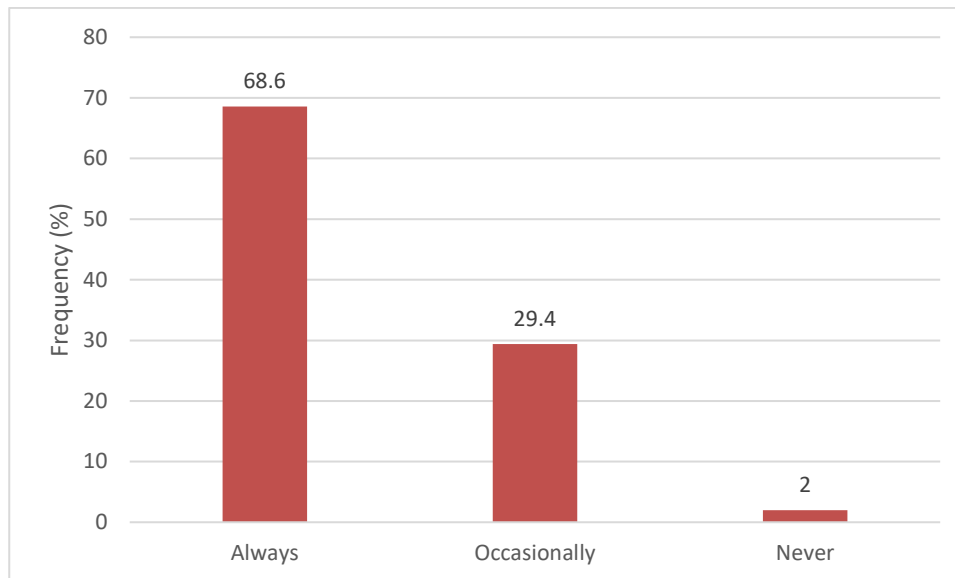


Figure 8. Frequencies of organizations using two or more types of social media for crisis communication.

In more detail, the results showed that most respondents favored using a combination of social media channels to respond to stakeholders for a single crisis: 67.6% of the respondents answered that their organizations always use two or more social media channels for crisis response. Only one respondent replied that he or she used only one type of social media channel during crises. Thus, survey (1b) indicated that if an organization uses social media for crisis communication, it would use a combination of such channels.

The survey then asked which social media channel was used most often during crises. The channel selection included Facebook, blogs and social forums. The respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 0-2 (0: Never, 1: Occasionally, 2: Always) the frequency with which they use each channel, as presented in figure 9.

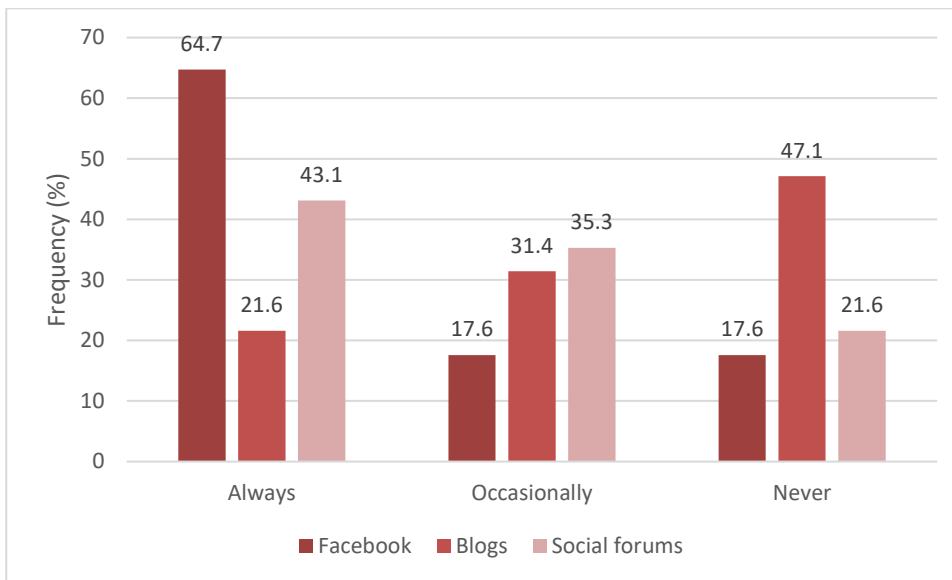


Figure 9. Level of frequency in which each social media channel was used for crisis response.

Figure 9 presents that 82.3% of the respondents had used Facebook for crisis communication (including 64.7% who replied that they always used Facebook during crises) while 53.0% indicated they had used blogs and 77.4% had used social forums. A Friedman test indicated that rankings of the frequency varied significantly across the three channels ($p < 0.001$). Followed up pairwise comparisons with the Wilcoxon signed-rank test and a Bonferroni adjusted α of .017 indicated that Facebook (mean rank = 2.37) was perceived as significantly more frequently used than blogs (mean rank = 1.54, $p < 0.001$) and social forums (mean rank = 2.09, $p = 0.009$). Facebook was therefore rated as most frequently used among the three social media channels.

H1b posited that among the social media channels used by companies and public relations practitioners in Vietnam, Facebook is used more often than others in crisis response. The survey showed that respondents use Facebook most frequently among all social media channels.

H1b is confirmed.

6.1.3. For crisis communication, Vietnamese practitioners perceive that traditional media are easier to control but that the two types of media are similarly appropriate, professional, appealing, and trustworthy.

According to DOI, an organization adopts an innovation such as social media for crisis communication when the advantages of the innovation outweigh the disadvantages. Therefore, questions 7-11 aimed to compare the relative advantages of traditional media to social media with five characteristics: controllability, appropriateness, professionalism, appeal to target audience and trust. These questions aimed to test H1c, which was that organizations in Vietnam perceive that social media, when compared to traditional media, has fewer advantages in crisis communication.

The hypothesis was largely rejected since practitioners generally perceived the two sets of channels similarly except for the characteristic of controllability, which was judged to be greater on traditional media. However, one statistically significant difference was found between perceptions of agency and in-house practitioners on the characteristic of trust. Agency practitioners more strongly perceived that people trust crisis information on traditional media more than on social media. The greater experience of agency practitioners with social media might have led them to this belief.

In more detail, for questions 7-11, the respondents were asked to state their level of agreement on characteristics of traditional media versus social media on a scale of 1-5 (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree). To review, each of these five characteristics was tested with a sub-hypothesis as follows:

- H1c1. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication on traditional media is easier to control.
- H1c2. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication on traditional media is more appropriate.
- H1c3. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication on traditional media is more professional or official.
- H1c4. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication on traditional media is more appealing to target audiences.
- H1c5. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that people have more trust in crisis communication on traditional media.

Figures 10 through 14 present the levels of agreement with each characteristic among agency versus in-house respondents. In figure 10, the results for H1c1 show that although respondents in both categories agreed that communication on traditional media is easier to control, the agreement was much stronger among the in-house respondents than the agency respondents (65.7% vs. 44.4%). Agency respondents showed different opinions, as the percentages of “disagree,” “neutral,” “agree” and “strongly agree” answers were almost the same. The higher agreement among in-house respondents may again indicate that they have less experience in communicating crises on social media than do agency practitioners and a greater fear of losing control on social media. H1c1, however, is rejected.

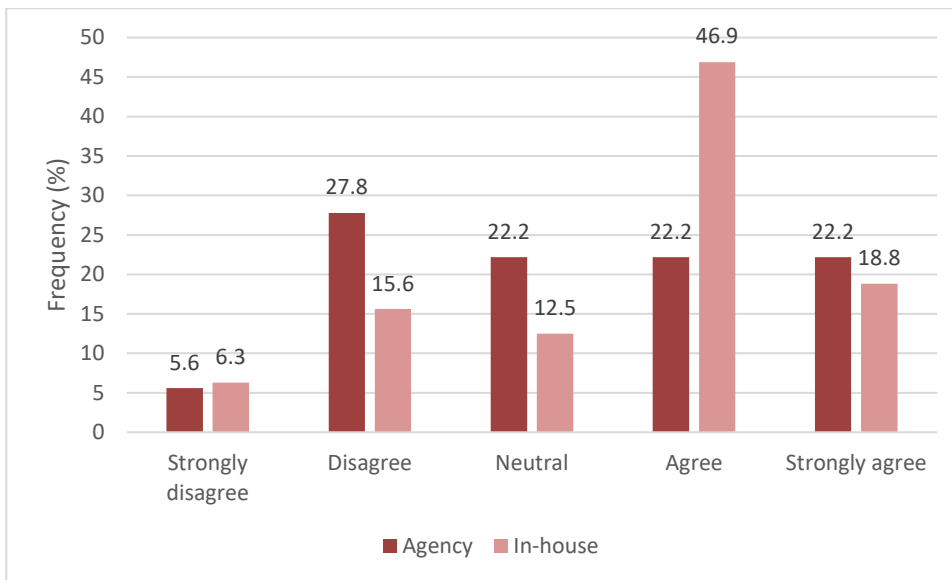


Figure 10. Levels of agreement between agency and in-house public relations practitioners that organizations think crisis communication on traditional media is easier to control than on social media.

To review, one of the characteristics of social media discussed in the interviews with public relations practitioners (1a) was ease of control. The interviews indicated that using social media makes crisis communication harder and less controllable. This result was found again in survey (1b) as above, with most respondents agreeing that communication on traditional media is easier to control than communication on social media. As found in the interviews and in Van's (2014) study, maintaining control over crisis communication is extremely important to many Vietnamese organizations, and for such organizations, the perception that social media channels are uncontrollable may outweigh all the other advantages of these channels so that organizations may either not adopt them for crisis communication or may use them in a limited way. Also, as Rogers (2003) mentioned, antecedent conditions to adoption of an innovation are previous practice, needs, innovativeness, and norms of a social system. According to the interviews, the norms of Vietnamese organizations generally lean toward having greater control in managing crises and thus away from the uncertainty of interaction with stakeholders on social media. However, some Vietnamese organizations may be highly innovative and find ways to use social media channels so that content on these channels is more controllable or they may decide that other advantages of social media channels outweigh the one characteristic of uncontrollability.

Figure 11 presents respondents' answers regarding the appropriateness of crisis communication on traditional media as compared with social media as per H1c2. Assessing the appropriateness of traditional media in crisis communication, agency respondents and in-house

respondents had very similar opinions. The results were almost evenly split: 38.9% of agency respondents agreed, while 33.4% disagreed that traditional media is more appropriate than social media in crisis communication, and 27.8% had a “no response” or a neutral opinion. Similarly, 40.7% of in-house respondents agreed, while 31.3% disagreed, and 28.1% had “no response.” H1c2 is rejected as agency and in-house practitioners responded similarly about the appropriateness of crisis communication on traditional media versus social media.

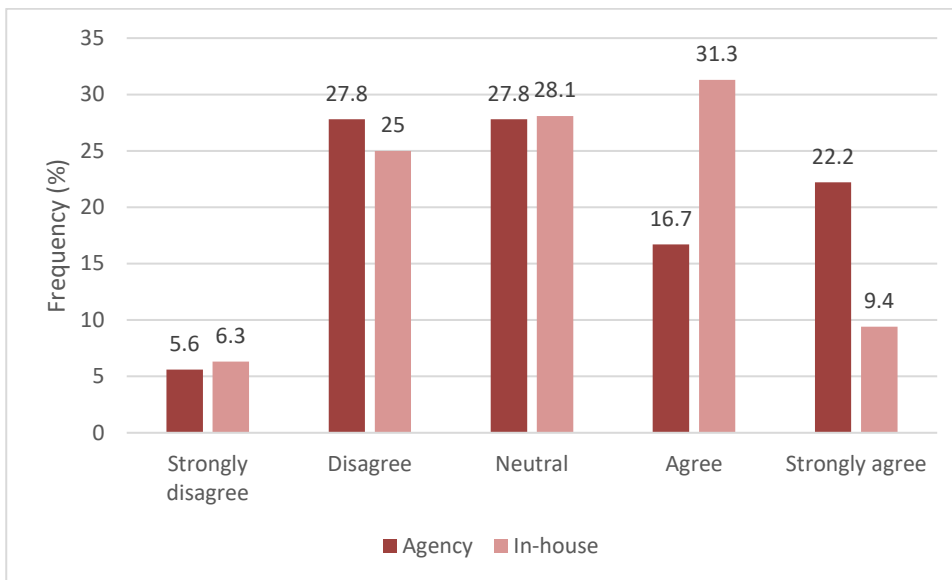


Figure 11. Levels of agreement between agency and in-house public relations practitioners that organizations think crisis communication on traditional media is more appropriate than on social media.

Figure 12 shows respondents’ answers regarding the professionalism of crisis communication on traditional media as per H1c3. Agency respondents and in-house respondents had similar opinions about perceived professionalism when an organization uses traditional media in crisis communication. Half of the respondents at least agreed that crisis communication on traditional media is more professional or official (50.0% of agency respondents and 50.0% of in-house respondents). H1c3 is rejected as agency and in-house practitioners responded similarly regarding the professionalism of a crisis response on traditional versus social media.

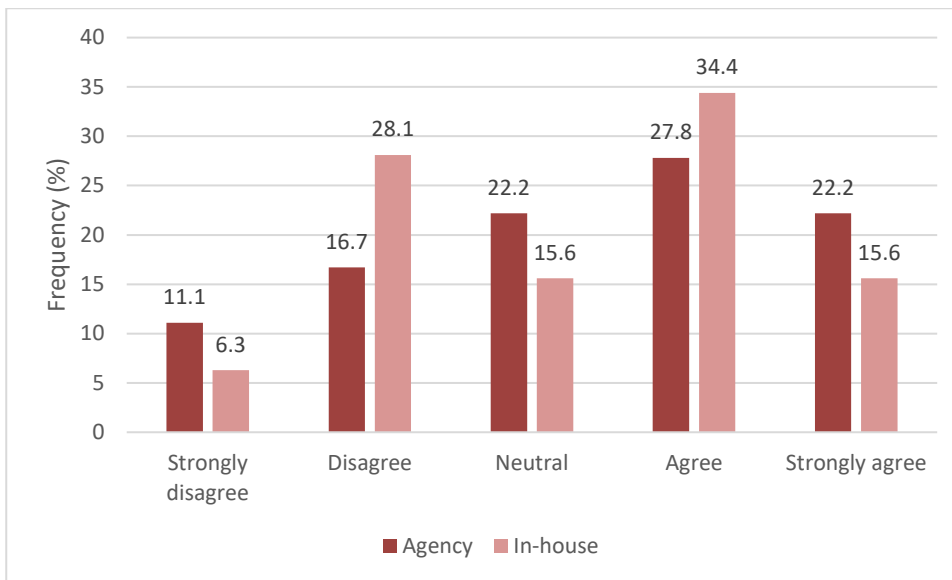


Figure 12. Levels of agreement between agency and in-house public relations practitioners that crisis communication on traditional media is more professional or official than on social media.

Figure 13 shows respondents' answers regarding the appeal of traditional media to target audiences in crisis communication as per H1c4. The survey respondents were asked if they believe that communication on traditional media is more appealing to target audiences than social media. By "appealing to," the researcher meant that traditional media can well reach the target audiences and meet their communication needs.

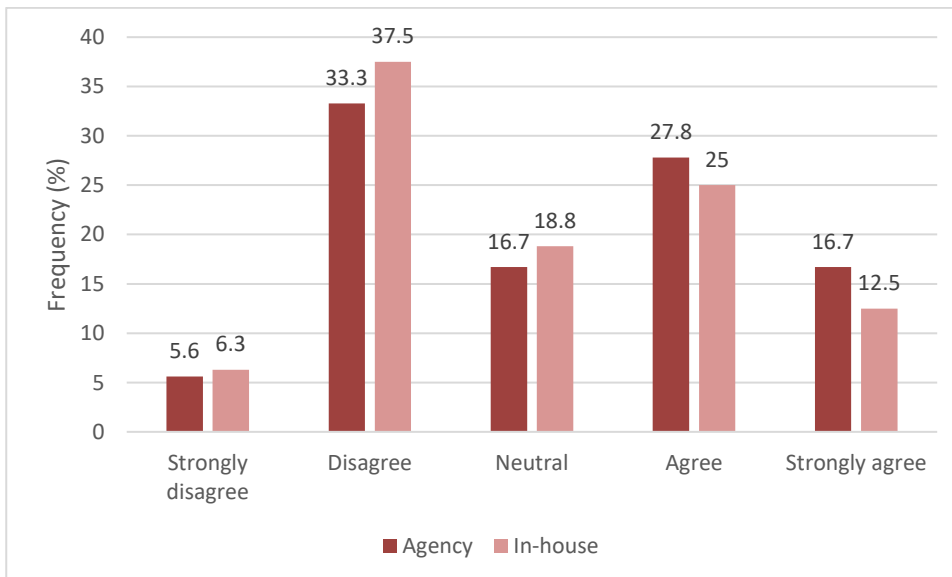


Figure 13. Levels of agreement between agency and in-house public relations practitioners that crisis communication on traditional media is more appealing to target audience than on social media.

Figure 13 shows a clear split on both agency and in-house respondents' opinions on the appeal of traditional media compared to social media: 44.5% of agency respondents agreed and 38.9% disagreed that traditional media channels are more appealing to their target audience than social media, and 37.5% of in-house respondents agreed and 43.8% disagreed that traditional media channels are more appealing. Further, more agency than in-house respondents believed that traditional media were more effective for crisis communication. Nonetheless, it cannot be confirmed with the survey results which type of channel is more effective in crisis communication. H1c4 is rejected since no statistically significant difference was found between agency and in-house opinions about the appeal of traditional versus social media for crisis response.

Figure 14 shows respondents' answers regarding whether they trust crisis information on traditional media as per H1c5. When asked if their organizations think people trust crisis information on traditional media more than on social media, agency respondents showed slightly more agreement than their in-house counterparts. Most agency respondents at least agreed to this statement (44.5%), in contrast to in-house respondents who had mixed opinions. For in-house respondents, 34.4% agreed and 40.7% disagreed that people have greater trust in traditional media. The difference between agency and in-house responses is statistically significant ($p = 0.038$). H1c5 is rejected since it is the agency and not the in-house practitioners who believe that people trust information on traditional media more than on social media.

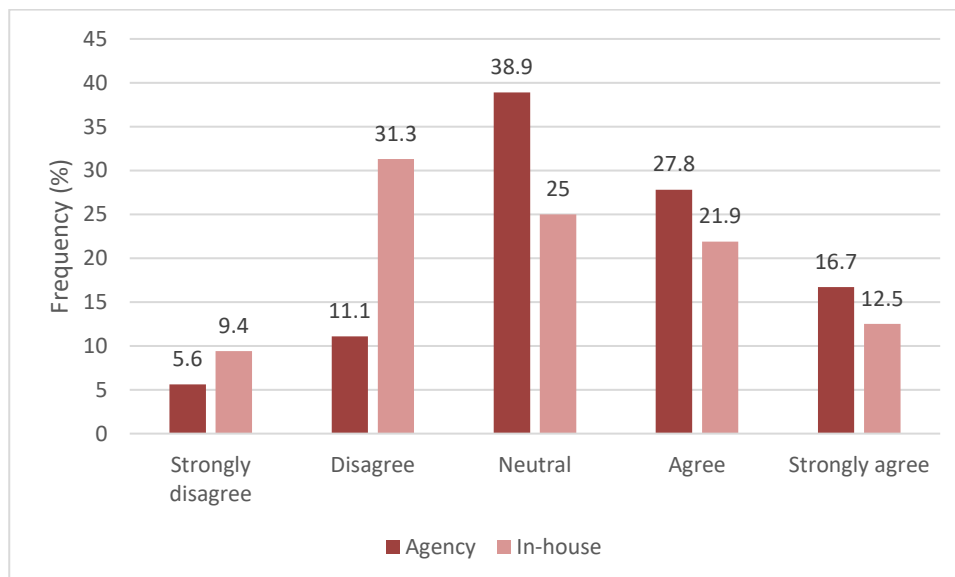


Figure 14. Levels of agreement between agency and in-house public relations practitioners that people trust crisis information on traditional media more than on social media.

Figures 15a through 15e below presents organizations' perceptions of each of the relative advantages of traditional media through five aforementioned characteristics: controllability, appropriateness, professionalism, appeal and trustworthiness.

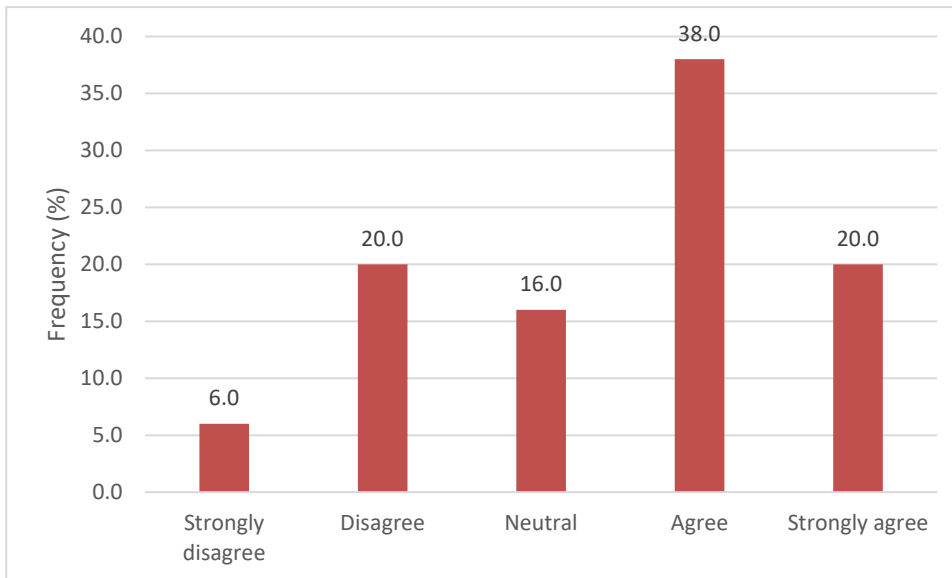


Figure 15a. Levels of agreement that organizations perceive traditional media is more controllable than social media in crisis communication.

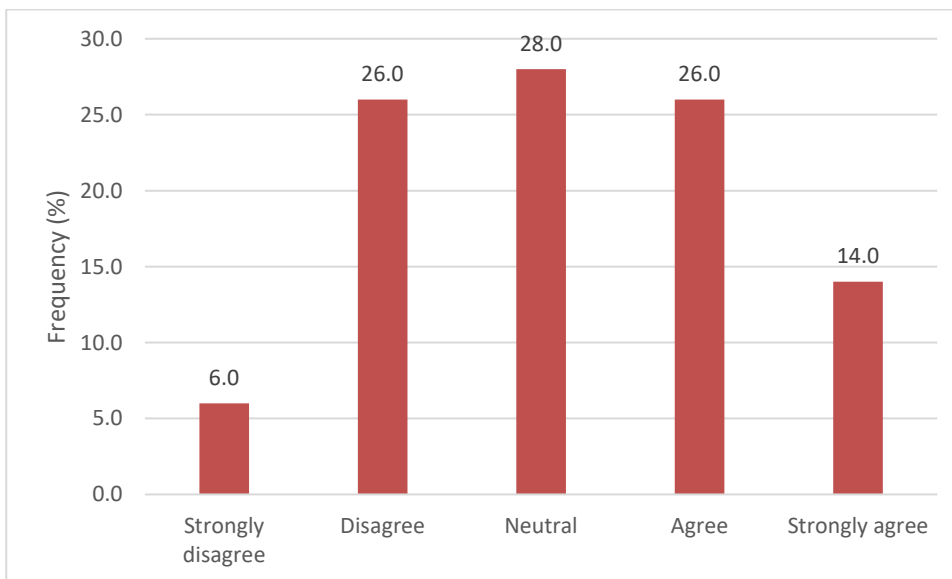


Figure 15b. Levels of agreement that organizations perceive traditional media to be more appropriate than social media in crisis communication.

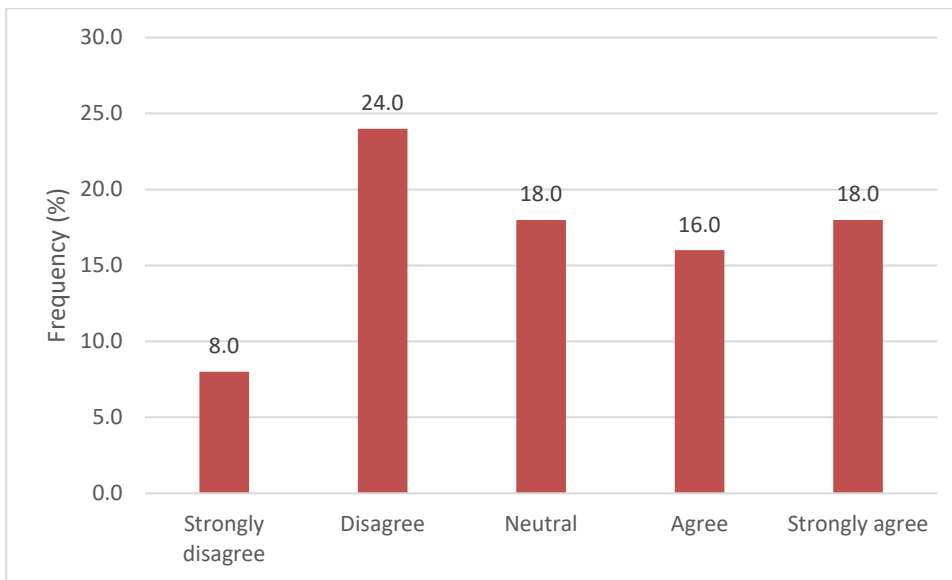


Figure 15c. Levels of agreement that organizations perceive traditional media to be more professional or official than social media in crisis communication.

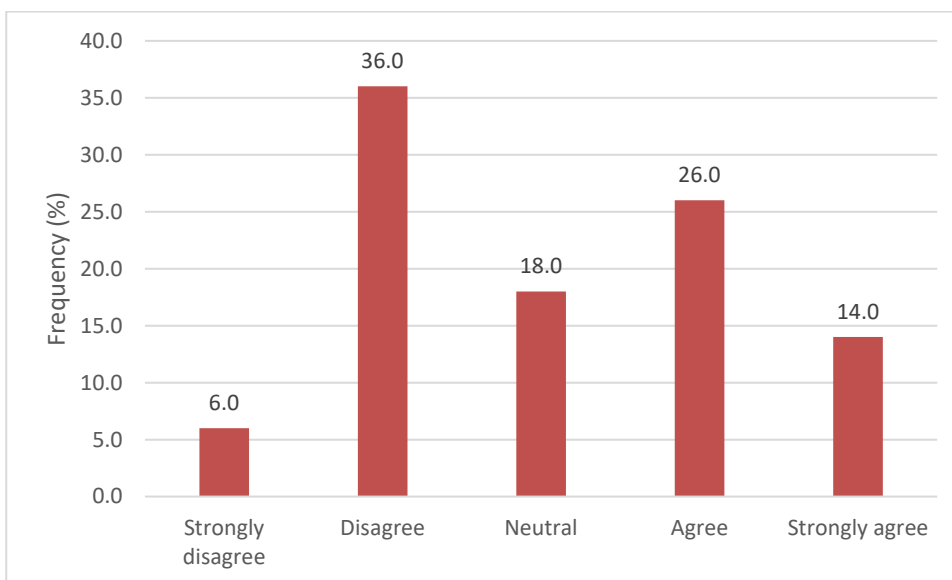


Figure 15d. Levels of agreement that organizations perceive traditional media to be more appealing to target audiences than social media in crisis communication.

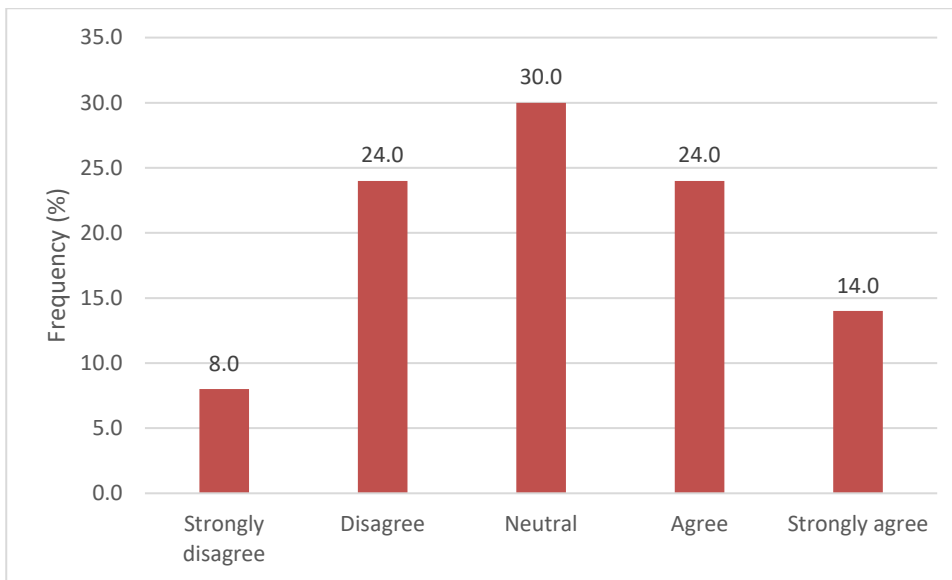


Figure 15e. Levels of agreement that organizations perceive traditional media to be more trustworthy than social media in crisis communication.

The results show that among the examined characteristics, respondents only agreed that traditional media is more controllable than social media, with 58.0% at least agreeing. For other characteristics, respondents had split opinions on the appropriateness, professionalism, appeal and trustworthiness of traditional media. The results show comparable percentages of agreement and disagreement to each: 40.0% at least agreed and 32.0% at least disagreed that traditional media is more appropriate, 34.0% at least agreed and 32.0% at least disagreed that traditional media is more professional, 40.0% at least agreed and 42.0% at least disagreed that traditional media is more appealing, and 38.0% at least agreed and 32.0% at least disagreed that traditional media is more trustworthy than social media in crisis communication.

H1c posited that organizations in Vietnam perceive that social media has fewer relative advantages in crisis communication compared to traditional media. Among the five proposed advantages, traditional media was seen as giving greater ease of control than social media. The other four dimensions (appropriateness, professionalism, appeal and trustworthiness) saw almost the same level of agreement and disagreement from the survey results.

H1c is partially confirmed, as controllability is the only advantage of traditional media over social media, as perceived by the respondents.

Further, in the open-ended section, the survey asked for the main social media characteristics that influence its adoption in crisis communication. Emerging from all the responses were the lack of control in information sharing, how people share information and who shares information on social media:

We're unable to control the speed and flow of information. Social media is a two-way interaction channel. The audience can interpret the information accurately or incorrectly. Information from an organization could be easily misconstrued or modified. Using social media requires an experienced and responsive team to choose an appropriate way to communicate a crisis. – An agency practitioner with more than nine years of experience.

Social media is a two-way information channel, and can backlash. We usually solve the issue directly with the persons who started it and do not use social media to explain. Inconsistent or unprofessional responses on social media can be shared or used to start another crisis. Even our competitors can use social media to direct public opinion to our disadvantage. In the end, the situation can be uncontrollable. – An in-house practitioner with six to eight years of experience.

The responses indicate that since most practitioners consider messages sent through social media to be less controllable than those sent through traditional media, social media is less suitable for crisis response.

6.1.4. Practitioners believe that stakeholders seek and share news more often on social than traditional media channels.

According to DOI, another characteristic that an innovation must have if it is to be adopted is compatibility. This means that the innovation is perceived as being consistent with the current norms, values and experiences of users. To measure the compatibility of social media for crisis communication in this study, questions 12-15 asked how public relations practitioners assessed the stakeholders' habits of seeking and sharing news in social media. In other words, did practitioners think that stakeholders would be likely to find crisis news if it were shared on social media. For these questions, the assessment is on a scale of 1-5 (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree). These questions aimed to test hypothesis H1d, which was that organizations in Vietnam think the majority of Vietnamese people seek and share crisis news on social media platforms. As will be discussed, H1d was confirmed.

In more detail, Figure 16 describes the levels of agreement regarding stakeholders' habit of seeking news on traditional media or social media. The results showed that 62.8% of the respondents at least agreed that stakeholders mainly seek news on social media, while only 15.7% agreed that stakeholders mainly seek news on traditional media. Of the respondents, 60.8% disagreed that their stakeholders mainly seek news on traditional media. These results indicate that Vietnamese public relations practitioners think that their stakeholders seek news significantly more often on social media channels ($p < 0.001$) than traditional media.

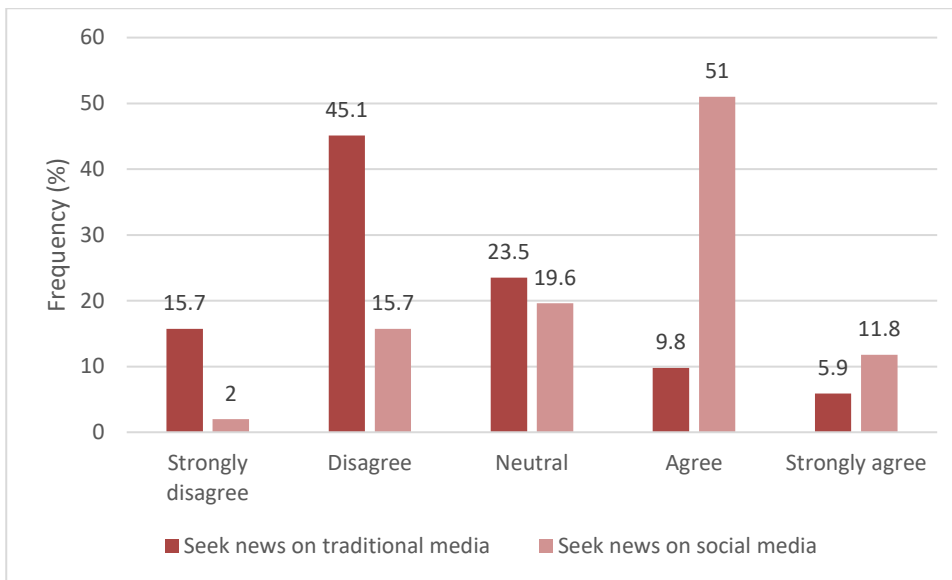


Figure 16. Levels of agreement among public relations practitioners regarding the media channels on which stakeholders seek news.

Figure 17 describes the levels of agreement regarding stakeholders' habit to share news on each media. The data for traditional media and social media were completely opposite. Most respondents agreed that their stakeholders share news on social media (72.6%) while most respondents disagreed that their stakeholders share news on traditional media (70.8%). Only 23.5% indicated that they mainly share news on traditional media. This difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The respondents thought that stakeholders mostly share news on social media channels.

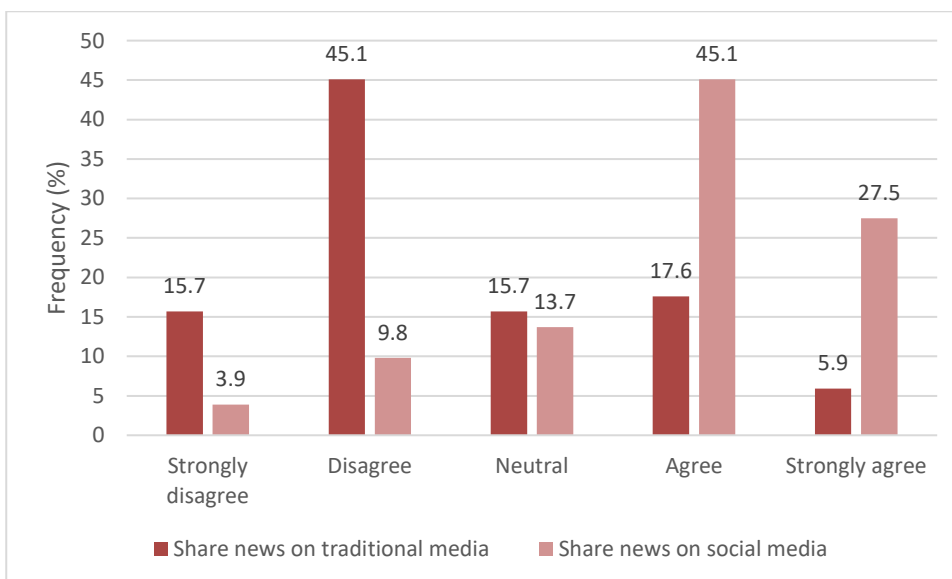


Figure 17. Levels of agreement among public relations practitioners regarding the channels on which stakeholders share news.

H1d posited that organizations in Vietnam think the majority of Vietnamese people seek and share news on social media platforms. The survey showed that Vietnamese public relations practitioners think that their stakeholders seek and share news more often on social media channels than on traditional media. These results were similar to those of interview (1a). Therefore, sharing crisis communication on social media is believed to be compatible with stakeholders' habits, which indicates that compatibility is not an obstacle to the adoption of social media for this purpose.

H1d is confirmed.

6.1.5. In Vietnamese organizations, the choice to use social media is generally raised by a team but the final decision is made by a senior manager.

As discussed earlier, DOI also considers how organizational structure influences the adoption of an innovation. In countries with higher power distance such as Vietnam, it is expected that innovations are adopted through an authority decision. According to this process, when the person who has authority, such as a senior manager, decides that an organization will adopt an innovation, all members will comply. This survey not only asked who makes the decision regarding social media for crisis communication, but who provides advice about the decision. In questions 26-27, on a scale of 1-5 (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree), the respondents were asked to assess who raises the idea of social media adoption to a crisis communication plan (as shown in figure 18) and who is the main decision maker. These questions aimed to test *H1e*, which posited that in Vietnamese organizations, a senior manager from the client, agency, or in-house is the one who decides whether to use social media in crisis response. As will be discussed, *H1e* was confirmed.

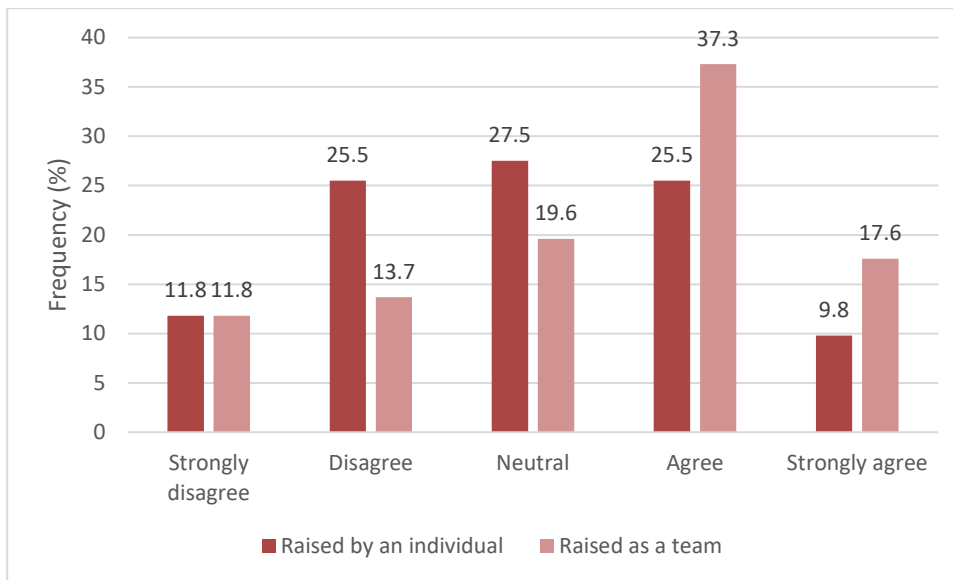


Figure 18. Levels of agreement among public relations practitioners regarding whether social media adoption for crisis communication is raised by an individual or as a team.

Figure 18 presents that 35.3% of the respondents at least agreed that the idea of social media adoption is usually raised by an individual, and 54.9% agreed that this idea is usually raised as a team. The respondents replied that the idea whether to adopt social media into a crisis communication plan was raised as a team ($p = 0.008$) significantly more often than as an individual. This result agreed with the finding from interview (1a) with public relations practitioners that the idea of whether to adopt social media into a crisis communication plan was raised more often collectively as a team.

Supporting the above results were answers to an open-ended question (question 28), which asked respondents who the main decision maker is for social media adoption. 56.9% (N=29) said that the decision maker is the top-level management of their organizations, such as a CEO or a general director, while 35.3% (N=18) said that it was the head of public relations or the marketing team who makes the final call. The other 7.8% (N=4) thought that it depends on the stakeholders, that the channel through which the stakeholders choose to communicate during a crisis is what an organization should adopt, and thus the stakeholders are the decision makers. In summary, the interview and survey both established that a senior-level person (of an organization, a department or a team) is most likely to make the final decision to use social media in crisis response, but that sometimes the choice is determined by the stakeholders.

H1e posited that in Vietnamese organizations, a senior manager from the client, agency, or in-house is the one who decides whether to use social media in crisis response. The survey

established that the idea of social media adoption in crisis response is typically raised as a team and then decided by a senior manager.

H1e is confirmed.

6.1.6. Organizations generally consider social media to be as easy-to-use, fast, and cost-effective as traditional media for crisis communication.

According to the literature review, other characteristics of social media that make these channels advantageous to adopt are their ease of use and quickness and cost-effectiveness for crisis communication compared to traditional media. Together, these characteristics describe the performance expectancy of media channels. Therefore, the objective of questions 16-18 was to compare the performance expectancy of social media to that of traditional media during crises with three characteristics: ease of communication, speed and cost-effectiveness. The aim of these questions was to test H1f, which posited that organizations in Vietnam perceive that social media is less useful than traditional media in crisis response. The respondents were asked to state their levels of agreement with each performance characteristic of the channel on a scale of 1-5 (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree). As will be discussed, H1f was rejected since practitioners generally perceive social media to be as easy-to-use, fast, and cost-effective as traditional media for crisis communication. Of note, more agency practitioners disagreed that social media was easy to use for crisis communication but agreed that it was more cost effective than traditional media.

Figure 19 presents public relations practitioners' perceptions of social media's performance expectancies through three aforementioned characteristics. The results show that respondents were mostly in favor of social media's performance during crises. Communication on social media is considered easy (68.0% at least agreed), fast (82.0% agreed) and cost-effective (58.0% agreed) by the majority of practitioners. Each characteristic is explained further in the following figures.

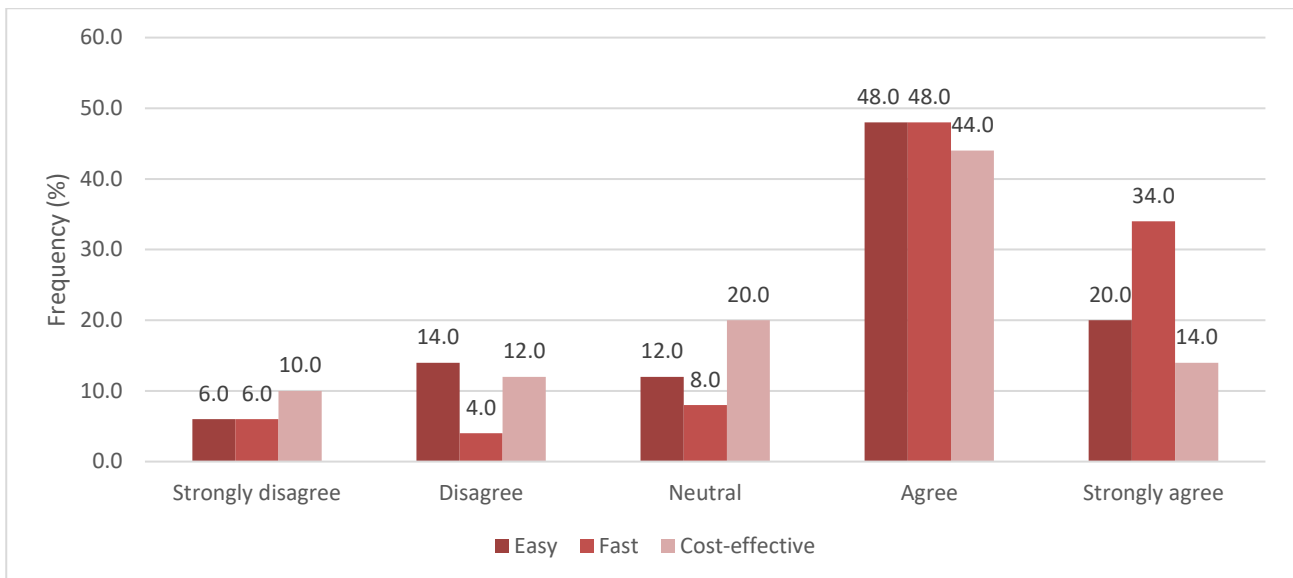


Figure 19. Public relations practitioners' levels of agreement regarding performance expectancies of social media for crisis response.

As presented earlier, H1f was further broken down into three sub-hypotheses so that the responses of agency and in-house practitioners could be compared. The three sub-hypotheses are as follows:

- H1f1. In-house practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication is easier on social media than it is on traditional media.
- H1f2. In-house practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication is faster on social media than traditional media.
- H1f3. In-house practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication is more cost-effective on social media than traditional media.

Figures 20 through 22 present the levels of agreement for each expectancy for agency and in-house respondents as per H1f1, H1f2, and H1f3 respectively. Figure 20 shows that most respondents agreed that it is easier to use social media for crisis communication than it is to use traditional media: 66.6% of agency respondents and 68.8% of in-house respondents at least agreed that social media makes crisis communication easier than traditional media. It was also noticeable that agency respondents had very clear opinions on the ease of communication characteristic of social media, with none giving a “neutral” answer. The number of agency respondents who disagreed about the ease of use was noticeably higher than the number of in-house respondents who disagreed (33.4% versus 12.6% respectively). Nonetheless, there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups so H1f1 is rejected.

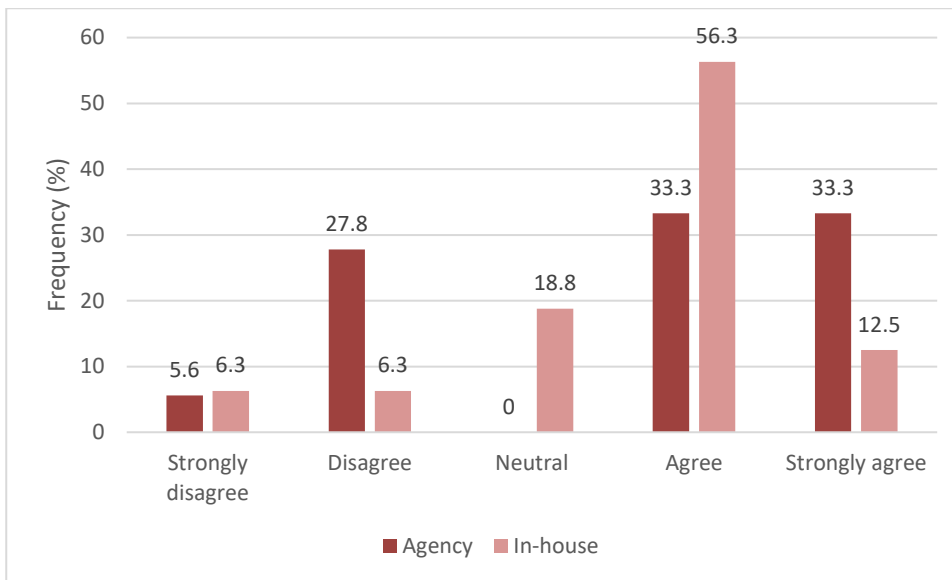


Figure 20. Levels of agreement between agency and in-house public relations practitioners that it is easier to communicate about a crisis on social media than it is on traditional media.

Figure 21 presents the levels of agreement between agency and in-house public relations practitioners that crisis communication is faster on social media than it is on traditional media. The results were quite consistent between the agency and in-house groups, as the majority of both groups indicated that crisis communication on social media is faster than on traditional media: 77.8% of agency respondents and 84.4% at least agreed that it is faster to practice crisis communication on social media. Therefore, H1f2 is rejected.

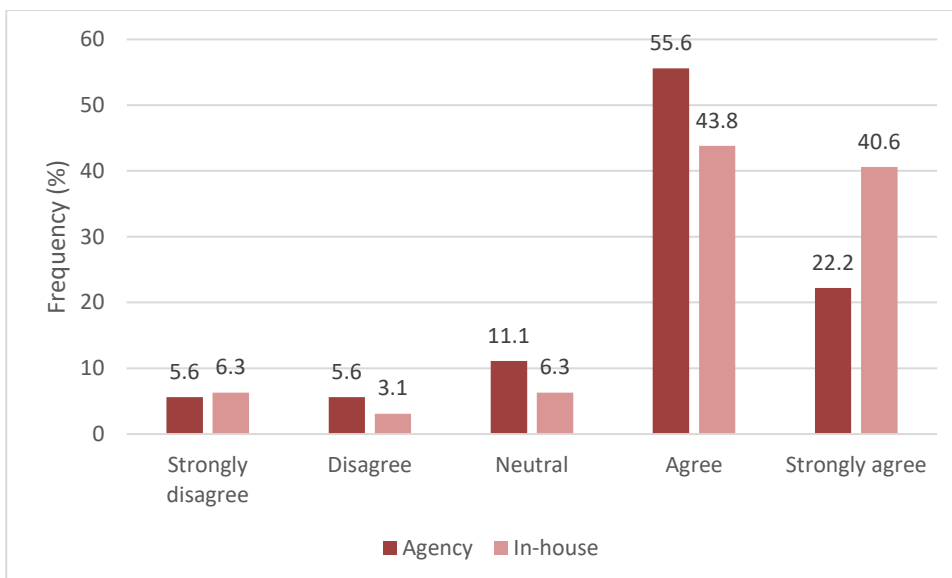


Figure 21. Levels of agreement between agency and in-house public relations practitioners that crisis communication is faster on social media than it is on traditional media.

Figure 22 presents how agency and in-house respondents agreed about the cost-effectiveness of crisis communication on social media compared to traditional media as per H1f3. Although most respondents from both agency and in-house groups agreed that crisis communication on social media is more cost-effective, the agreement was stronger among agency respondents: 71.1% of agency respondents at least agreed that social media is more cost-effective than traditional media, compared to 55.3% of in-house respondents. In contrast, it is worth noting that the number of agency respondents who strongly disagreed was almost the same as the number of respondents who strongly agreed (16.7% versus 22.2%, respectively). Nonetheless, H1f3 is rejected.

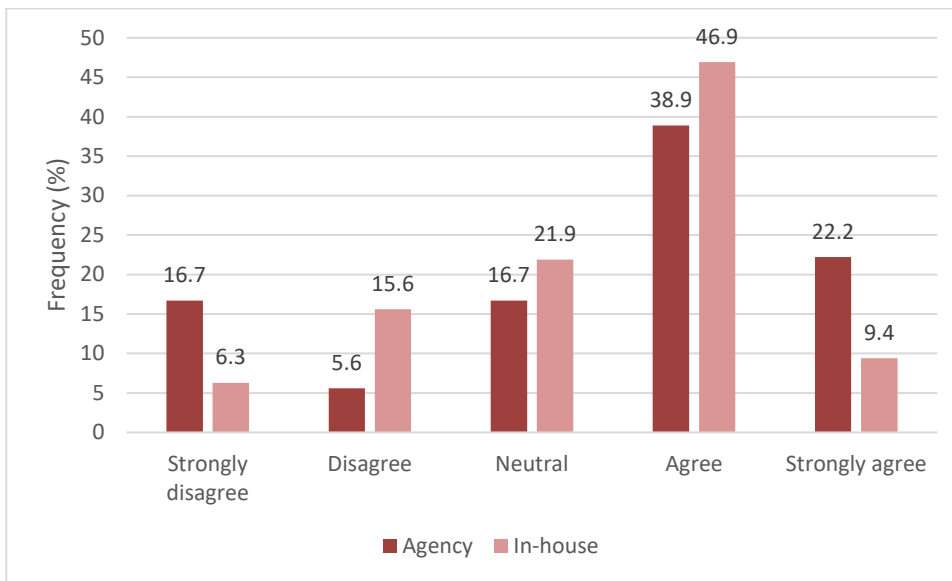


Figure 22. Levels of agreement between agency and in-house public relations practitioners that crisis communication on social media is more cost-effective than it is on traditional media.

Overall, a cross-category analysis showed that while respondents from both agency and in-house groups had high performance expectations of social media, the agency respondents did not think as highly of social media's performance expectancy as their in-house counterparts did, as seen in all three examined dimensions.

H1f posited that organizations in Vietnam perceive that social media is less useful than traditional media in crisis response. The survey indicated that social media is expected to perform as well as traditional media in terms of ease of communication, speed and cost-effectiveness.

H1f is rejected.

6.1.7. Organizations are generally willing to use social media for crisis communication as it would not take additional time and effort, they already have enough knowledge and technical support, and the channels are easy to use.

According to DOI, for an innovation to be adopted, it must also have a comparable effort expectancy compared to the previous technology. Therefore, the aim of questions 19-23 was to compare the effort expectancy of social media to that of traditional media through evaluating the time and effort required to respond through each channel (presented in figure 23), the organization's knowledge or technical support required for using the channel (presented in figure 24), and the channel's ease of use (presented in figure 25). These questions were used to test H1g, which posited that organizations in Vietnam think that adoption of social media in crisis response requires more effort than using traditional media. The respondents were asked to state their levels of agreement for each effort characteristic of the channel on a scale of 1-5 (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree). As will be discussed, H1g was rejected. Respondents expressed that their organizations are generally willing to use social media for crisis communication it would not take additional time and effort, they already have enough knowledge and technical support and the channels are easy to use.

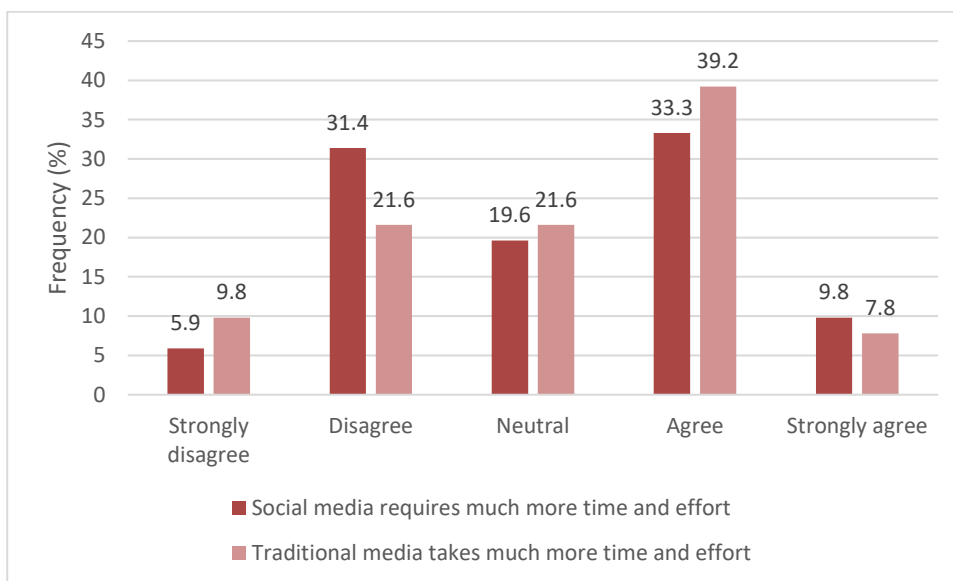


Figure 23. Levels of agreement among public relations practitioners regarding the time and effort required for crisis communication on social media versus traditional media.

The percentage of respondents who at least agreed that social media requires more time and effort than traditional media to use in crisis communication was 43.1%, which was very similar to the percentage of respondents who agreed that using traditional media takes more time and effort than social media at 47.0%. There was no significant difference in the expectancy of time and effort

($p = 0.847$) for each type of channel. However, it was noticeable that respondents were divided about the amount of time and effort required to use social media in crisis communication as the levels of agreement and disagreement were comparable.

Figure 24 shows that 70.5% of the respondents at least agreed that their organizations have enough knowledge or enough technical support to adopt social media for crisis communication plans and figure 25 shows that 56.9% agreed that social media is easy to use. The results showed that most respondents agreed that it would not take much effort to comfortably use social media in crisis communication.

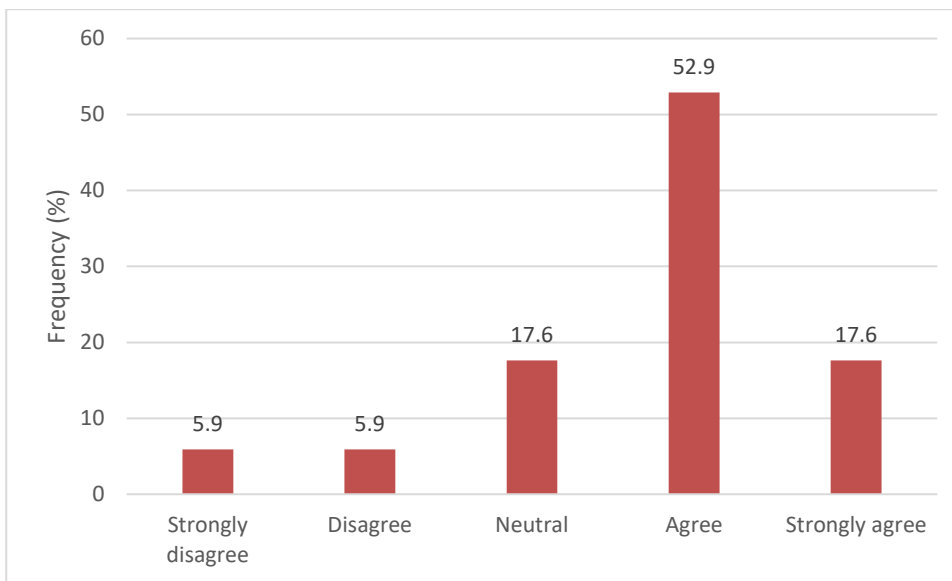


Figure 24. Levels of agreement among public relations practitioners that their organization has the required knowledge or technical support to use social media in crisis communication.

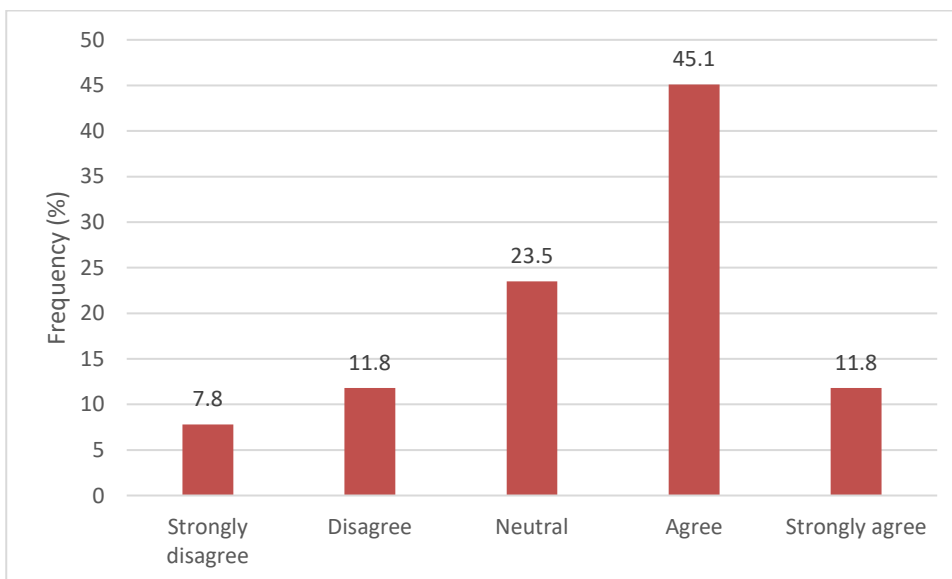


Figure 25. Levels of agreement among public relations practitioners that their organization perceives social media to be easy to use for crisis communication.

The final question in this set (question 23) asked respondents to assess from all the above effort expectancies, whether their organizations are willing to use social media in crisis response. The assessment was also on a scale of 1-5 (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree).

Figure 26 shows that 66.7% of the respondents agreed to strongly agreed to the provided statement. This result showed that most respondents thought that their organizations were willing to use social media for crisis response.

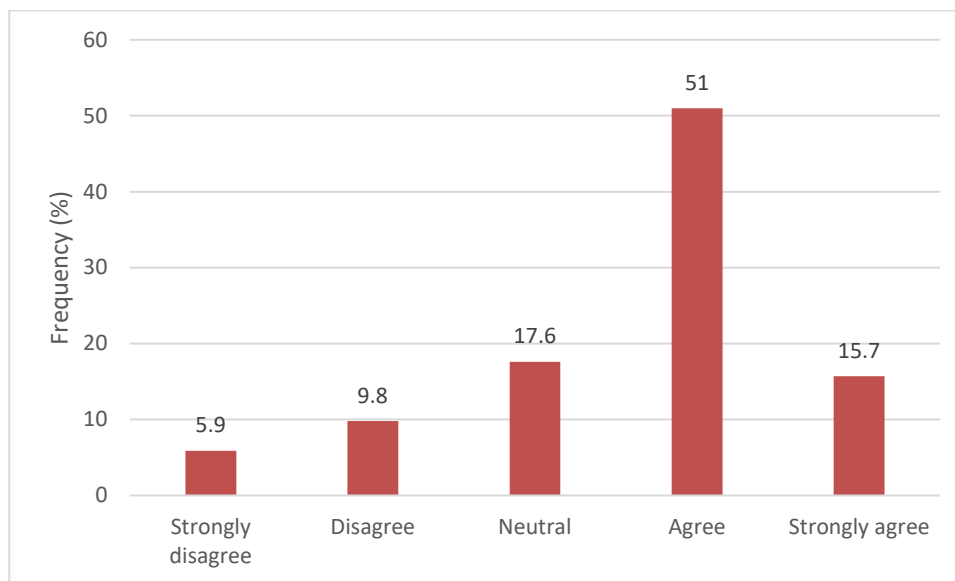


Figure 26. Levels of agreement among public relations practitioners that their organization is willing to use social media for crisis response.

To summarize, the survey results showed that most respondents agreed that it would not take much effort to comfortably use social media in crisis communication, and that Vietnamese organizations think that adoption of social media in crisis response does not require more effort than using traditional media in crisis response.

H1g posited that organizations in Vietnam think that adoption of social media in crisis response requires more effort than using traditional media in crisis response.

H1g is rejected. Social media channels are not perceived to take more effort than traditional media in crisis response.

6.1.8. Vietnamese organizations tend to choose crisis communication channels based on the characteristics of each crisis.

Going into more depth regarding the use of media for crisis communication, questions 24 and 25 aimed to see if public relations practitioners had preferred communication channels during crises, or if the channels were chosen on a case-by-case basis. On a scale from 1-5 (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree), the respondents expressed their agreement on how they chose channels.

Figure 27 presents the levels of agreement between agency and in-house respondents that their organization(s) has preferred channels for crisis communication, and Figure 28 shows the levels of agreement between agency and in-house respondents that their organization(s) chooses channels for crisis communication based on the characteristics of each crisis. Both figures indicate that when assessing whether their organizations choose crisis communication channels from a preferred selection or based on each crisis, agency and in-house respondents had similar opinions. A slightly higher percentage of agency respondents than in-house respondents said that they have preferred channels (83.3% and 71.9%, respectively), while there were comparable percentages of respondents in each category who choose the channels on a case-by-case basis (88.8% and 87.5%, respectively).

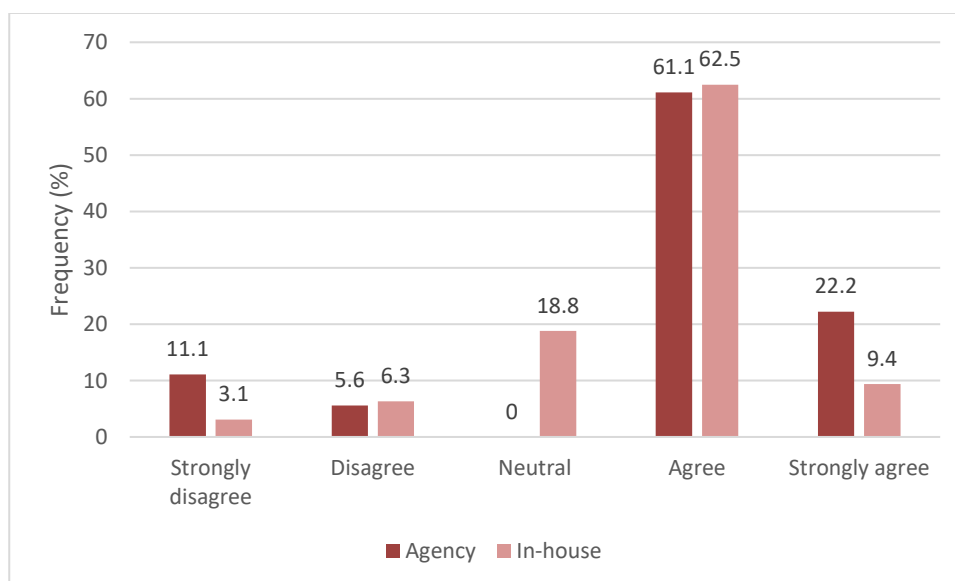


Figure 27. Levels of agreement between agency and in-house practitioners that organizations have preferred channels for crisis communication.

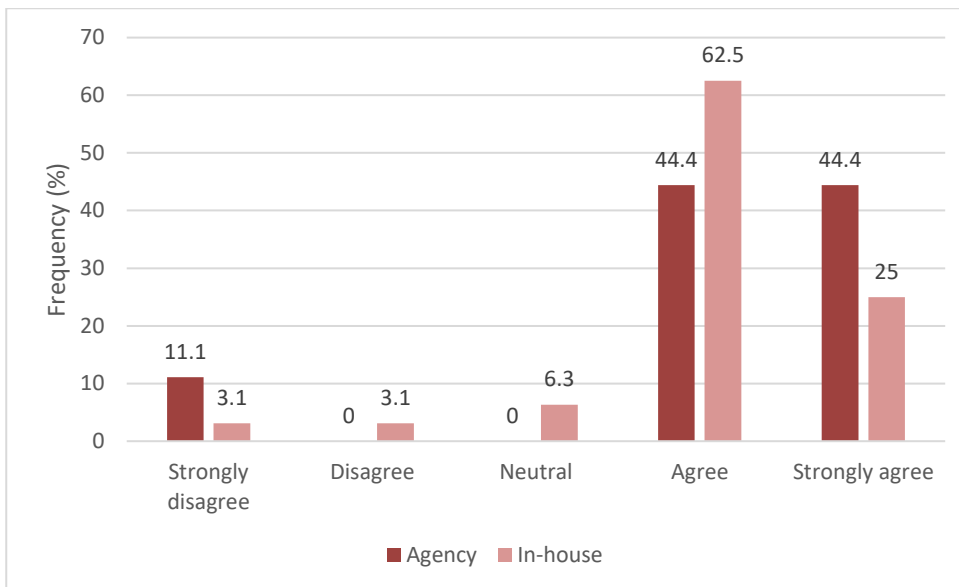


Figure 28. Levels of agreement between agency and in-house practitioners that organizations choose channels for crisis communication based on characteristics of each crisis.

6.1.9. Social media should be used together with traditional media in crisis communication.

The survey respondents stated in the open-ended section that depending on the nature of the involved organization, the scale of a crisis, and the demographics of the key stakeholders and involved groups, social media or traditional media should be chosen as the main channel for communication:

We need to analyze a crisis carefully to decide on a suitable communication channel. For example, my target customers are farmers with limited use of social media so I have to use traditional media to reach them. – An in-house practitioner with two to five years of experience.

Social media is an important crisis communication channel... However, I think it depends on the nature of the organization and the crisis to decide. I work for a state company and our crisis communication procedure only uses one spokesperson and limited response on social media. We use traditional media to respond and to build the relationship with the media at the same time. – An in-house practitioner with six to eight years of experience.

The open-ended answers included the main crisis characteristic that influences the use of each channel in crisis communication. There were three main responses: the origin of a crisis (on which channel it started), the stakeholders of a crisis (people who are affected or care about a crisis and are not necessarily the key stakeholders of the responsible organization in normal times), and the need for an immediate reply. Some respondents noted that when a small crisis involving

younger people starts on social media, social media can be used for the response. For crises on a larger scale or for negative news that is spreading too fast, some respondents said that they choose traditional media to be the main channels for communication:

It depends on the crisis. If a crisis starts on social media, I'll use social media to respond and reach out to the involved stakeholders on social media to negotiate or stop the negative comments. – An in-house practitioner with two to five years of experience.

If a crisis starts on social media and has not had big impact yet, we can use social media to respond. We don't want to publicize the issue to a bigger public by responding on another channel, in this case, traditional media. However, if a crisis is escalating fast, traditional media is the main channel to offer official response and action. – An agency practitioner with two to five years of experience.

Nonetheless, in both cases, some survey respondents indicated that social media should be used together with traditional media to increase efficiency:

Crisis communication needs a thorough approach. While social media and traditional media don't have an apparent advantage compared to the other, it's better to combine their strengths for better coverage and more complete reach to the stakeholders. – An in-house practitioner with six to eight years of experience.

6.1.10. Herd mentality of Vietnamese social media users can worsen a crisis.

The last question of survey (1b) was an open-ended question that asked if there is anything else the respondents would like to share about social media use in crisis communication in Vietnam. The objective of this question was to give the respondents an opportunity to speak their minds about anything related to crisis communication in Vietnam that had not been mentioned before. One main theme from the replies was the herd effect of Vietnamese online groups that usually worsens situations and escalates issues into bursting crises:

Most social media users like to share negative information. They don't stop to find the source of information or verify information. They share the negative news quite deliberately. This habit can start or even worsen a crisis. – An agency practitioner with two to five years of experience.

I think the herd mentality of Vietnamese people is a big factor in spreading information on social media. Thus, we must be careful when using these channels. – An in-house practitioner with six to eight years of experience.

In Vietnam, people tend to decide against big companies and protect "the weak" though whose fault it is may not be decided yet. People also go with the flow. If two people said that your company is wrong, it means everybody thinks it is wrong. Because of this emotional

thinking, it is harder to contain a crisis. – An agency practitioner with more than nine years of experience.

In general, some respondents indicated that Vietnamese social media users tend to share negative news a lot and usually do not check for the information's source or credibility. This tendency has made it hard for public relations practitioners to control and contain a crisis on social media. This chapter now turns to survey (2b), which was conducted with Vietnamese stakeholders.

6.2. Survey (2b) with Vietnamese Stakeholders

Survey (2b) was used to answer RQ2 about whether Vietnamese stakeholders expect an organization's crisis response to appear on social media channels, and if so, how. As discussed previously, the questions in survey (2b) were designed in part to test Schultz et al.'s (2011) NCCT, which concluded that the channel in which a positive crisis message (apology, sympathy or information) is sent affects stakeholder response. In the study, Schultz et al. found that communicating a crisis on two social media channels simultaneously (Twitter and a blog) led to higher post-crisis reputation and that communication on social media (either a Twitter post or a Twitter post along with a blog post) led to less intense crisis reactions. Researchers considered that use of two social media channels for sending a crisis message was more effective simply because stakeholders received the message twice. A second study by Utz et al. (2012) found that use of social media (Facebook or Twitter) compared to a newspaper article led to higher perception of organizational reputation, less sharing of the crisis, and fewer secondary crisis reactions such as saying bad things about the organization. The 2012 study also found that the message itself matters, that when the message reported an organization to be responsible for a crisis rather than a victim of it, people spoke less positively about the organization and became angrier toward it, which led to greater sharing of the crisis response, more secondary reactions, and a negative evaluation of the organization. In conclusion, the researchers said that people are more likely to share crisis responses on newspapers because they find newspapers to be more credible. Also, however, use of social media for crisis response is perceived to signal an organization's willingness to quickly inform stakeholders and engage in dialog. Altogether, how stakeholders perceive a channel for crisis response depends upon their past experiences with these channels and interpretations of them.

Considering NCCT and following responses in interview (2a), five hypotheses were formed in response to RQ2. The paired Wilcoxon test was used to test for differences in overall scoring between traditional media and social media. For differences among the answers of the three age groups (split as in Figure 29), the Friedman test was used together with followed-up pairwise comparisons with the Wilcoxon signed-rank test and a Bonferroni adjusted α of .017. The

differences among age groups were not statistically significant unless noted. All but the open-ended questions were mandatory and could not be skipped.

Detailed survey (2b) results are presented in the appendices.

Respondents in survey (2b) were 370 individuals who lived and worked in Vietnam in for the last two years. The ages ranged from 18 to 63 (mean: 29, standard deviation: 9.2), and 64.3% were female and 35.7% male. The age and gender distributions are presented in figures 29 and 30.

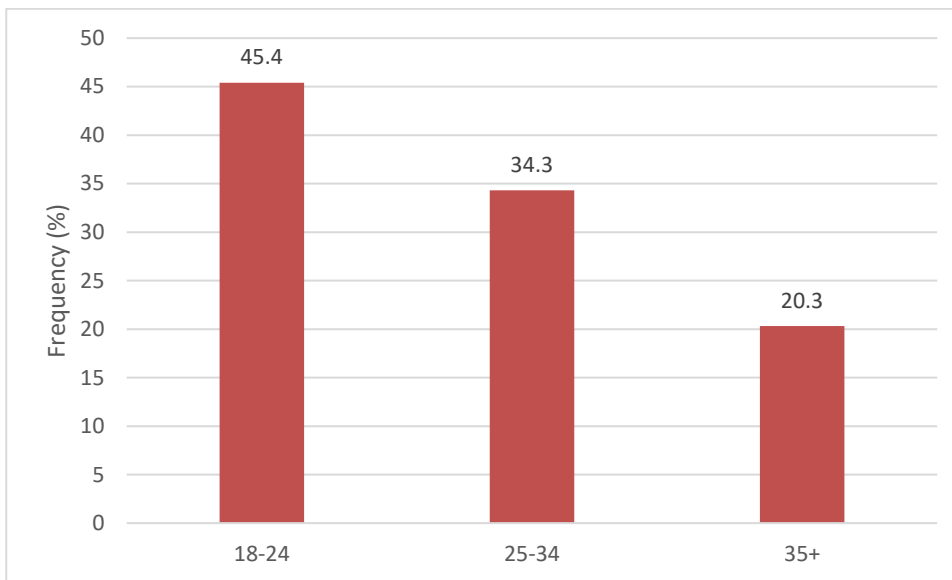


Figure 29. Age distribution of survey (2b) respondents.

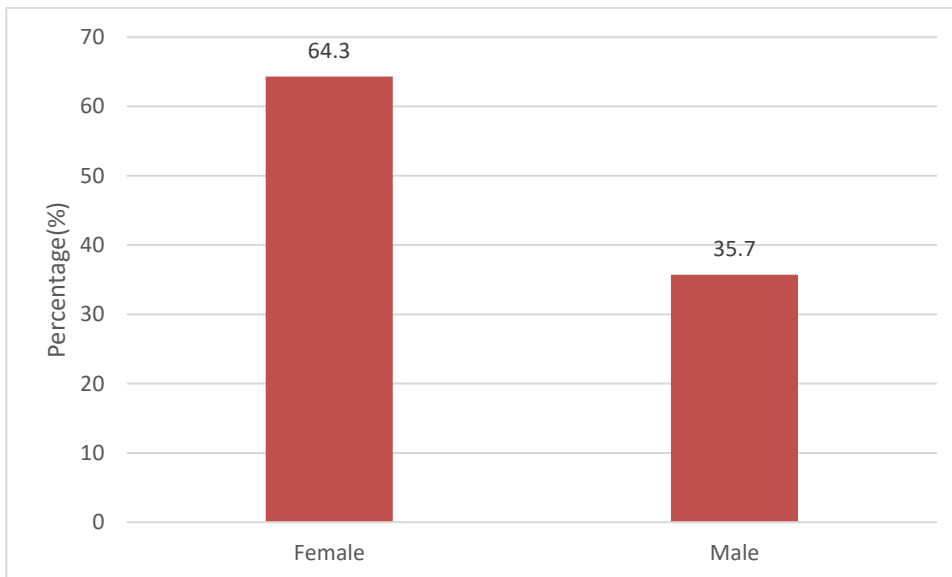


Figure 30. Gender distribution of survey (2b) respondents.

As mentioned in chapter 4, survey (2b) aimed to have a sample with age groups close to the age distribution of Vietnam's internet users. A leading worldwide report on the internet stated that the age distribution of Vietnam's internet users is as follows: 40% below age 24, 32.8% from 25 to 34 years old and 27.3% above 35 ("Age distribution," n.d.). Respectively, the collected sample for survey (2b) had the age distribution of 45.4%, 34.3% and 20.3% for these groups. Although small, the sample nonetheless had age proportions close to the population. Thus, the sample of survey (2b) is somewhat representative of internet users in Vietnam.

6.2.1. Vietnamese stakeholders generally prefer to receive official, carefully crafted information on traditional media than quick and direct information on social media.

In questions 1 and 2, the respondents were asked whether they "expect organizations to make the initial crisis response official and carefully-crafted, even if it takes more time" (characteristics that are usually displayed in traditional media responses) or "expect organizations to make the initial crisis response quick and direct, even if the information may not be official or verified" (characteristics that are usually associated with social media responses). These questions aimed to test H2a, which posited that when a crisis begins on social media, most Vietnamese stakeholders expect organizations to communicate responsively on social media rather than requiring them to wait for information on traditional media. The assessment was on a scale of 1-5 (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree).

As will be discussed, H2a was rejected. The results indicated that in general, stakeholders would prefer to receive official, carefully crafted information on traditional media than quick and direct information on social media. This preference appeared across age groups. However, a noteworthy although statistically insignificant finding was that older stakeholders had divided opinions about receiving crisis information on social media. That is, nearly half the older stakeholders expressed a preference for receiving crisis information on social media. According to NCCT, this preference indicates a different attitude toward social media, or organizations that communicate crises on these channels, among older stakeholders and lends some support to the theory.

Figure 31 shows the overall preferences of crisis information across all age groups. 82.4% of the respondents at least agreed that they prefer official and carefully-crafted crisis information, while only 35.4% agreed that they prefer quick and direct information. Further, a remarkably high 51.6% of the respondents indicated disagreement to a preference for quick and direct crisis information. Respondents significantly preferred an organization to share official and carefully-crafted information during crises ($p < 0.001$) to sharing quick information.

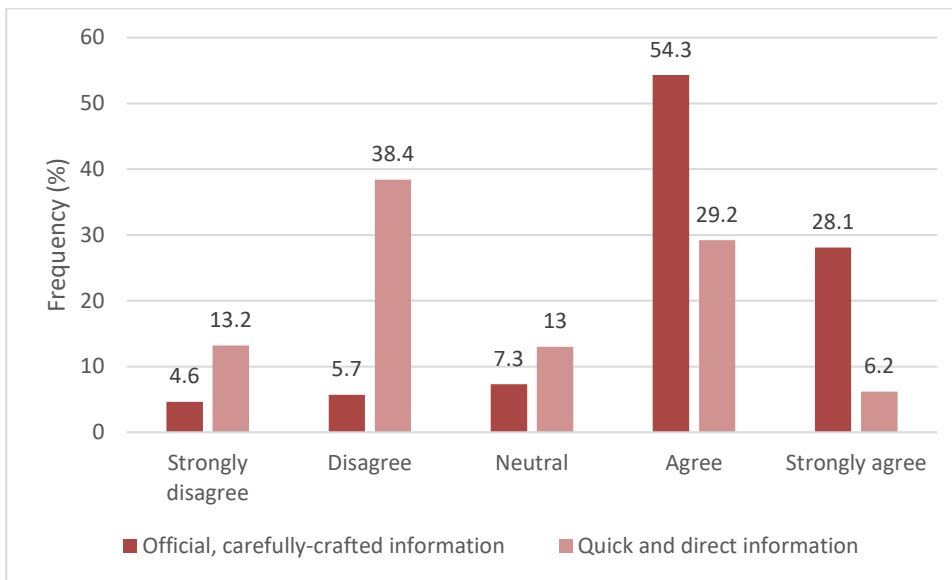


Figure 31. Levels of agreement regarding stakeholders' preference for receiving crisis information.

H2a posited that Vietnamese stakeholders expect organizations to communicate more responsively on social media channels during crises rather than make them wait for information on traditional media. The survey showed that while a timely response is expected during crises, Vietnamese stakeholders prefer organizations to make an official and carefully-crafted crisis response.

H2a is rejected.

As noted earlier, H2a was further broken down into two sub-hypotheses so that a comparison could be made between different age groups. The two sub-hypotheses are as follows:

- H2a1. Compared to younger stakeholders, older stakeholders have greater preference for receiving official and carefully crafted crisis information on traditional media.
- H2a2. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders have greater preference for receiving quick and direct crisis information on social media.

Figures 32, which corresponds with H2a1, shows how respondents prefer official, carefully-crafted crisis information among the three age groups. The results show that 81.2% respondents aged 18-24, 82.6% respondents aged 25-34 and 85.3% respondents aged 35 or older at least agreed that they prefer official information in a crisis response. The strong preference of official and carefully-crafted crisis information is consistent among age groups. H2a1 is therefore rejected.

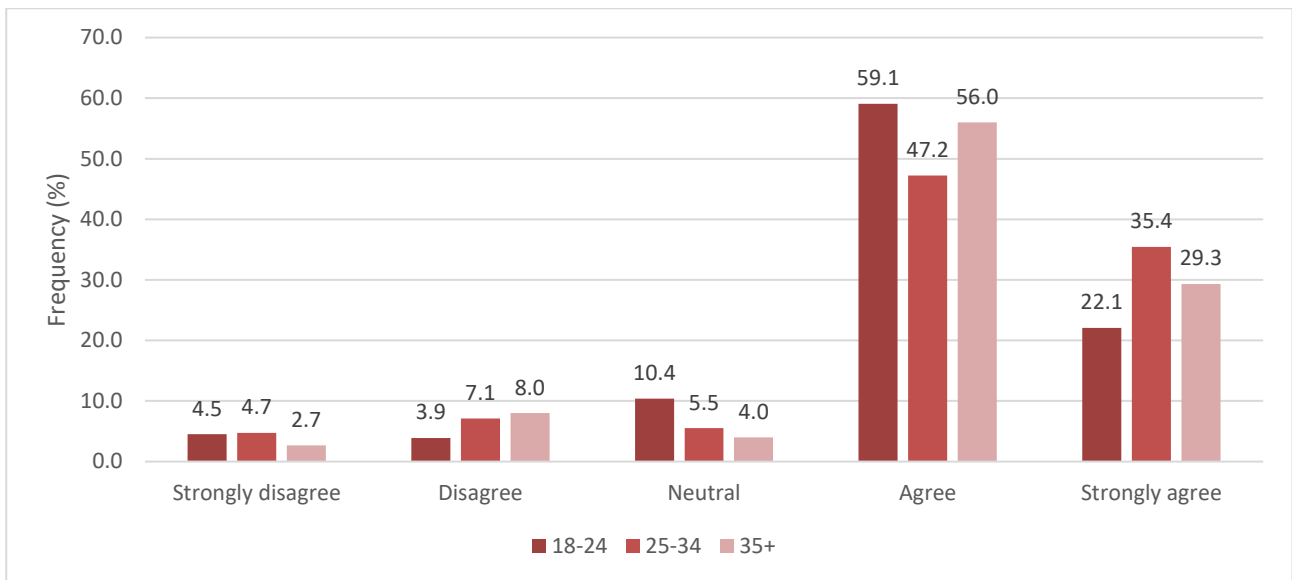


Figure 32. Levels of agreement among age groups regarding stakeholders' preference for official and carefully-crafted crisis information.

Next, Figure 33, which corresponds with H2a2, shows respondents' preference for quick and direct crisis information on social media among the three age groups. As discussed earlier, the respondents showed conflicting opinions to receiving quick and direct crisis information. Most of the younger respondents (aged 24 or under) disagreed that they want quick crisis responses (56.5%) while older respondents (aged 25 or above) had split responses regarding the statement, with almost the same number disagreeing as agreeing. It is also noticeable that the respondents had a clear attitude regarding whether they prefer a quick and direct crisis response since few gave neutral answers. H2a2 is therefore rejected.

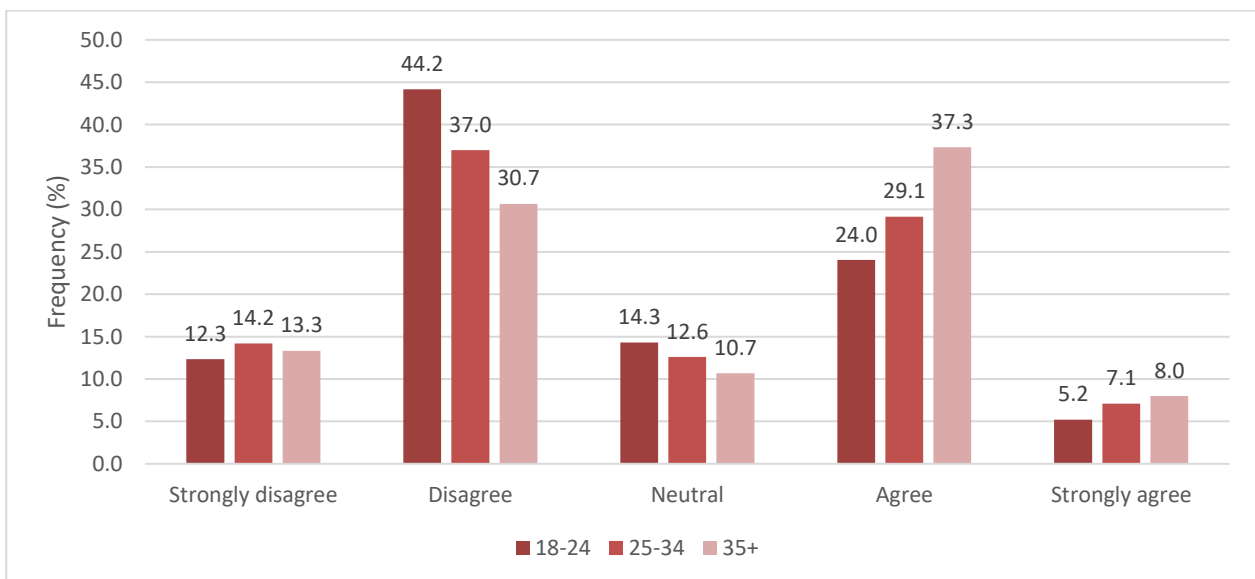


Figure 33. Levels of agreement among stakeholder age groups regarding their preference for quick and direct crisis information.

In support of the above findings, the open-ended question at the end of the survey showed that many participants said they would rather wait for an official, credible and acceptable response from the responsible organization than have a quickly-prepared response on social media:

Being responsive during a crisis is important, but it is more important to provide accurate information and evidence that an organization is investigating the issue and will take responsibility for a crisis. – A 22-year-old female respondent.

I'd like both speed and accuracy in a crisis response, but more on the accuracy side. When a response appear across channels, information on traditional media and social media should all be accurate and consistent. It makes me more confused if I receive a quick response on social media that does not agree with the information provided later on other channels. – A 27-year-old female respondent.

The participants of interview (2a) indicated that although they want organizations to respond more quickly, they also want the responses to be accurate. However, older stakeholders are happy to receive a quick and direct response on social media.

6.2.2. Vietnamese stakeholders perceive that traditional media is significantly more credible than social media for crisis communication.

Questions 3-8 aimed to explore whether Vietnamese stakeholders trust and appreciate crisis information shared on social media channels. Trust and appreciation were measured by questions about the credibility, speed (in relaying crisis information) and convenience of social media, and how these channels compare with traditional media. These questions aimed to test H2b, which posited that most Vietnamese stakeholders have low trust and appreciation for crisis information shared on social media channels compare to such information shared on traditional channels. Accordingly, the survey respondents were then asked for their perceptions of social media and traditional media as credible, quick and convenient channels for sharing crisis information. As noted earlier, H2b was further broken down into nine sub-hypotheses as follows:

- H2b1. Stakeholders believe that traditional media is more credible than social media for sharing crisis information.
- H2b2. Compared to younger stakeholders, older stakeholders will rate the credibility of traditional media more highly than social media for sharing crisis information.
- H2b3. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will rate the credibility of social media more highly than traditional media for sharing crisis information.

- H2b4. Stakeholders think social media is quicker than traditional media for crisis communication.
- H2b5. Compared to younger stakeholders, older stakeholders will rate the quickness of traditional media more highly for sharing crisis information.
- H2b6. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will rate the quickness of social media more highly for sharing crisis information.
- H2b7. Stakeholders think social media is more convenient than traditional media for sharing crisis information.
- H2b8. Compared to younger stakeholders, older stakeholders will more strongly agree that traditional media are convenient for sharing crisis information.
- H2b9. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly agree that social media are convenient for sharing crisis information.

As will be discussed, the results confirmed that stakeholders perceive traditional media to be more credible than social media for crisis communication, although older stakeholders also perceive social media to be credible. Also, stakeholders perceive that that social media is faster than traditional media for crisis communication. However, older stakeholders have a statistically significant higher perception that social media channels are faster for crisis communication. Lastly, the results confirmed that stakeholders perceive social media channels to be more convenient than traditional channels for crisis communication. Again, however, there was a statistically significant difference between younger and older stakeholders with older stakeholders (age 25 and above) having a higher perception that social media channels are more convenient for crisis communication. These findings regarding older stakeholders also support NCCT, which says that different groups and people will have different perceptions toward the channel used for a crisis response depending upon people's own experiences with and interpretations of the channels.

In more detail, Figure 34, which corresponds to H2b1, presents the answers to questions 3 and 6 regarding whether respondents "believe traditional media is a credible channel for organizations to share crisis information" and whether they "believe social media is a credible channel for organizations to share crisis information." 54.6% of the respondents at least agreed that traditional media is a credible channel for communicating crises, while only 31.8% agreed that social media is credible. Moreover, the respondents' perceptions of social media's credibility were not neutral, as 42.7% thought social media channels are not credible. In summary, the respondents significantly regarded traditional media as more credible channels for sharing crisis information

than social media ($p < 0.001$). H2b1 is therefore confirmed. In Vietnam, traditional media is generally perceived to be more credible than social media for crisis response.

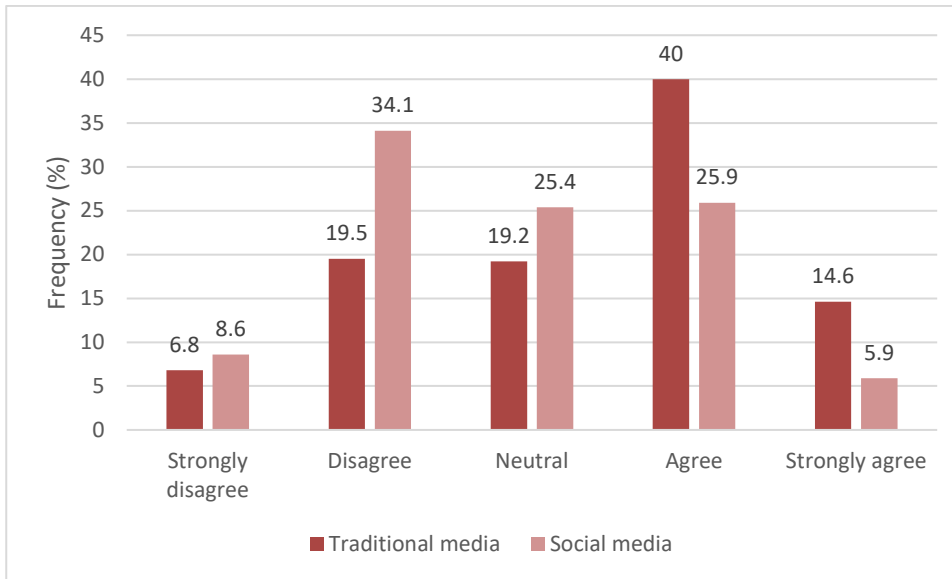


Figure 34. Levels of agreement regarding the credibility of traditional media versus social media in sharing crisis information.

Figure 35, which corresponds to H2b2, presents levels of agreement among age groups that traditional media is a credible channel. Among all three age groups, there is a consistent agreement that crisis information on traditional media is credible: 53.9% of respondents aged 18-24, 50.4% of respondents aged 25-34 and 65.4% of respondents aged 35 or older at least agreed that traditional media are credible channels for sharing crisis information. H2b2 is therefore rejected as traditional media appears to be similarly credible across all age groups.

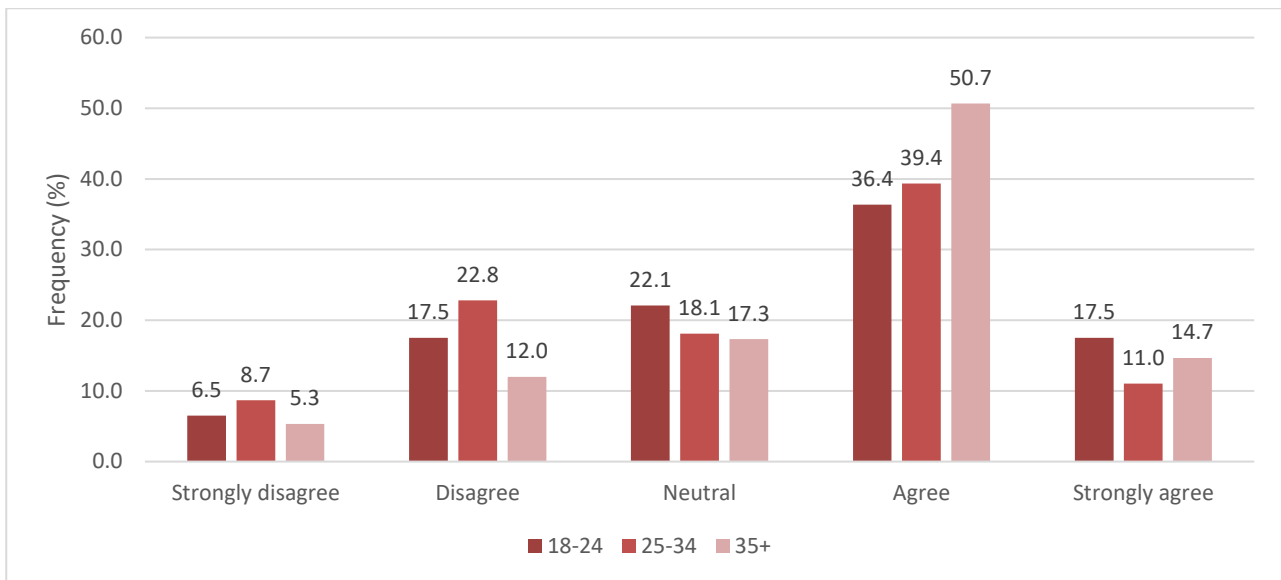


Figure 35. Levels of agreement among age groups regarding the credibility of traditional media in sharing crisis information.

Figure 36, which corresponds to H2b3, presents levels of agreement among age groups that social media are credible channels. In the assessment of social media, only the older respondents (aged 35 or above) showed support regarding social media's credibility, with 54.7% at least agreeing that social media are credible channels for delivering crisis information. In contrast, the younger respondents generally did not consider social media to be credible, with 48% of respondents aged 18-24 and 44.8% of respondents aged 25-34 at least disagreeing with the statement. The differences were statistically significant across the three age groups ($p < 0.001$). Followed-up pairwise comparisons with the Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that the differences between the oldest age group and the two younger ones were more significant ($p < 0.001$ and $p = 0.001$). In this study, H2b3 is rejected since it is the older stakeholders (aged 35 and above), rather than younger ones, who perceive social media channels to be credible for delivering crisis information.

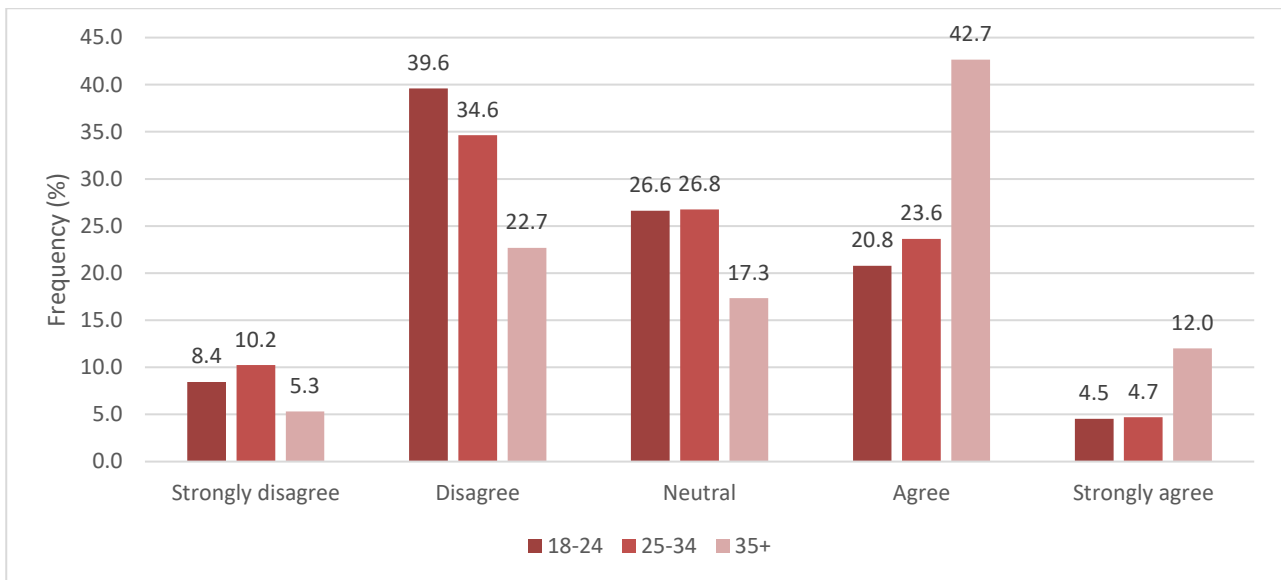


Figure 36. Levels of agreement among age groups regarding the credibility of social media in sharing crisis information.

In questions 4 and 7, respondents were asked if they “believe traditional media are quick channels for organizations to share crisis information” and if they “believe social media are quick channels for organizations to share crisis information.” Figure 37, which corresponds to H2b4, indicates the overall perception of the respondents regarding the speed of traditional media and social media in crisis communication: 38.2% of the respondents at least agreed that traditional media are quick channels for crisis communication, and 78.1% at least agreed that social media are quick channels. Social media are significantly regarded as quicker channels for crisis information sharing than traditional media ($p < 0.001$). H2b4 is therefore confirmed: Stakeholders generally perceive social media as quicker for crisis communication than traditional media.

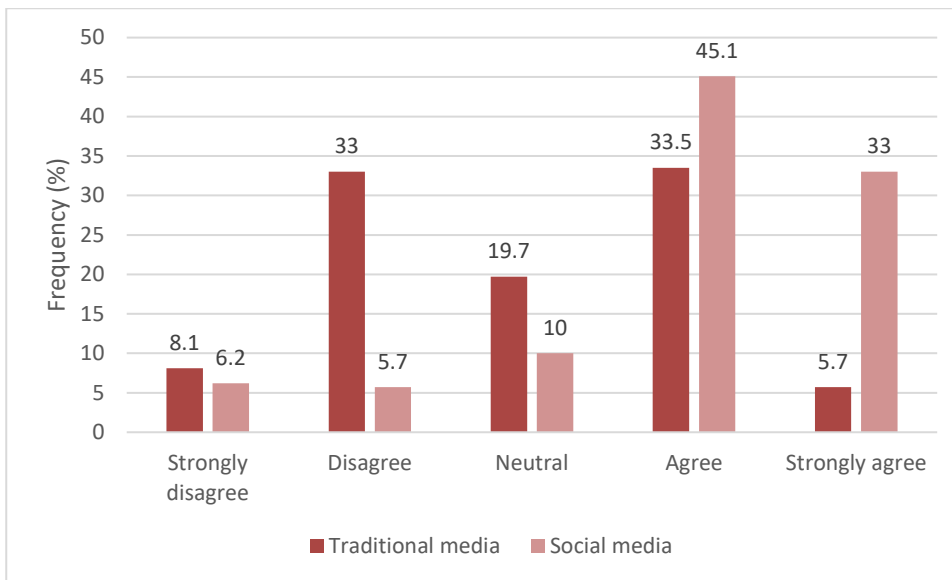


Figure 37. Levels of agreement regarding the quickness of traditional media and social media in sharing crisis information.

Figure 38, which corresponds to H2b5, presents levels of agreement among age groups that traditional media are quick channels. Respondents from all age groups had mixed opinions whether traditional media are quick channels for sharing crisis information, with almost equal numbers of respondents who agreed and disagreed to the quickness of these channels. H2b5 is therefore rejected as there was no statistical difference among the responses of different age groups regarding the quickness of traditional media for crisis communication.

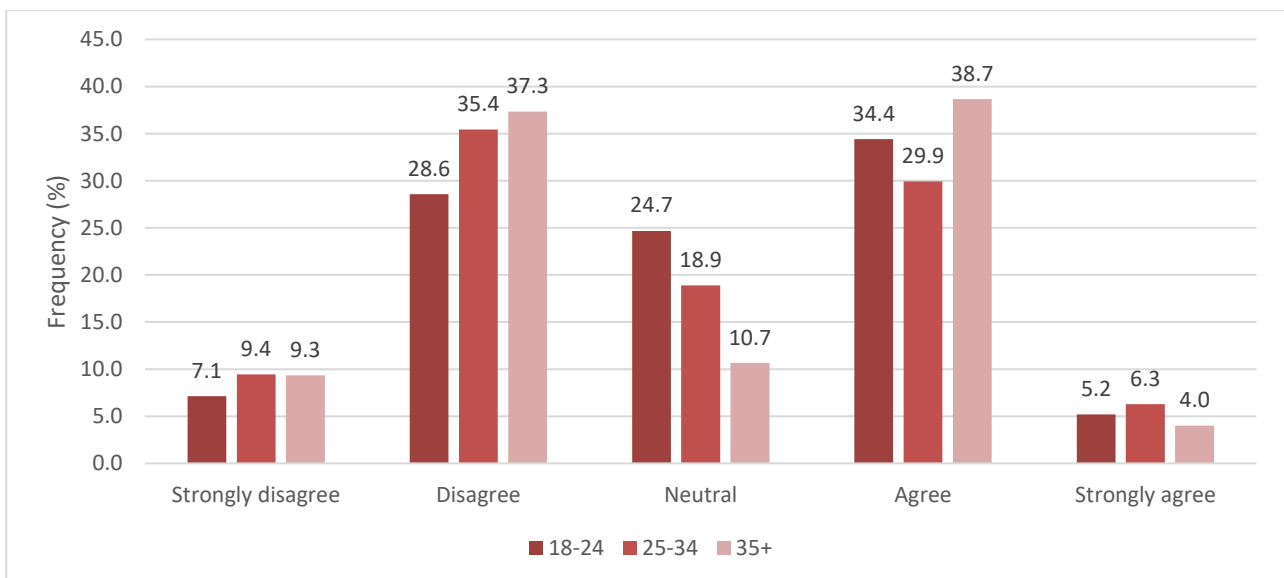


Figure 38. Levels of agreement among age groups regarding the quickness of traditional media in sharing crisis information.

Figure 39, which corresponds to H2b6, presents levels of agreement among age groups that social media are quick channels. Most of survey (2b)’s respondents showed very distinct support that social media are quick channels for sharing crisis information with more than 80% of respondents in all age groups agreeing. Particularly, older respondents (aged 35 or above) expressed more absolute opinion with almost half of the respondents (46.7%) choosing “strongly agree”. The differences were statistically significant among age groups ($p = 0.019$). A post hoc Wilcoxon test showed that the difference between the 35+ age group and the 18-24 age group is the most significant among the pairs ($p = 0.009$). According to this study, older stakeholders had a stronger perception than younger stakeholders that social media were quick channels for sharing crisis information. H2b6 is therefore rejected.

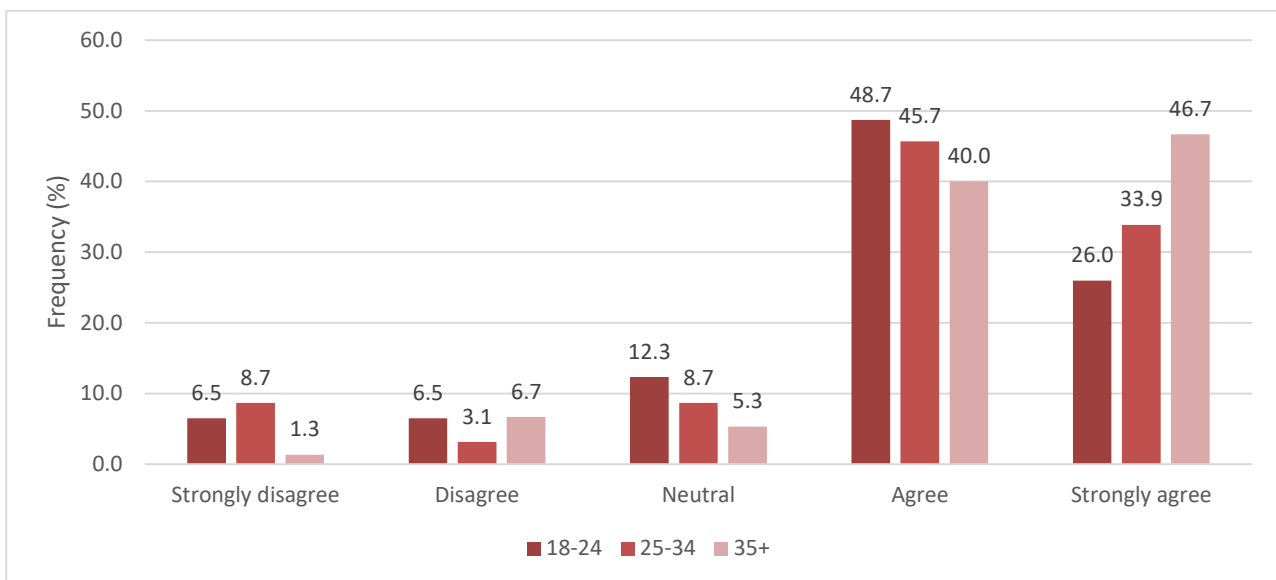


Figure 39. Levels of agreement among age groups regarding the quickness of social media in sharing crisis information.

Figure 40, which corresponds to H2b7, shows the answers to questions 5 and 8 regarding whether respondents “believe traditional media are convenient channels for organizations to share crisis information” and if they “believe social media are convenient channels for organizations to share crisis information.” Comparing the overall agreement of all respondents to the convenience of the communication channels, the results show that 52.2% of the respondents at least agreed that traditional media are convenient channels for crisis communication, while 73.5% at least agreed that social media are convenient channels. The difference was statistically significant, $p < 0.001$.

Social media channels were considered more convenient than traditional media channels for sharing crisis information. Therefore, H2b7 is confirmed.

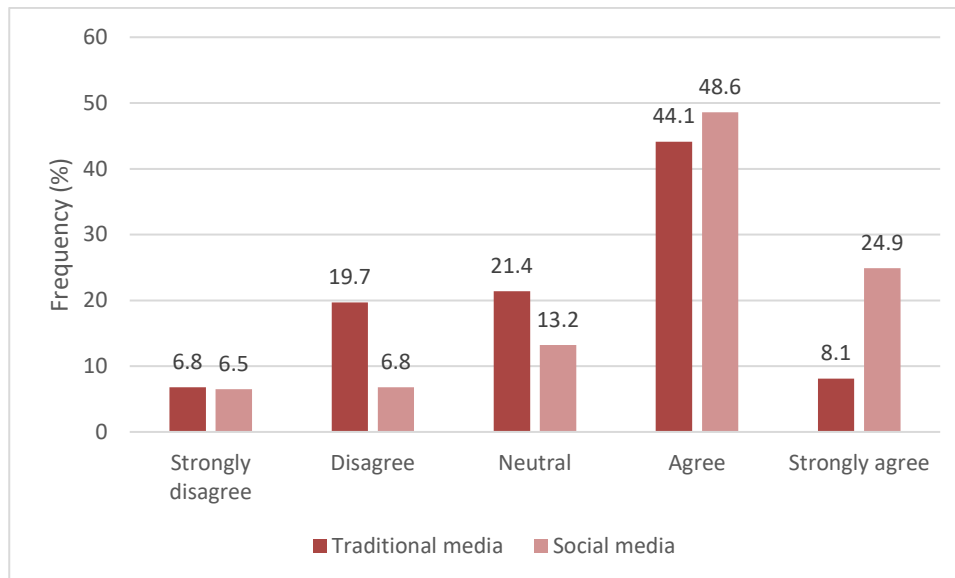


Figure 40. Levels of agreement regarding the convenience of traditional media and social media in sharing crisis information.

Figure 41, which corresponds with H2b8, presents levels of agreement among age groups that traditional media are convenient channels. The results show that most respondents agreed that traditional media are convenient channels for sharing crisis information. The agreement is strongest among older respondents aged 35 or above (60% of this age group at least agreed) and weakest among respondents aged 25-34 (49.6% at least agreed). Nonetheless, as no statistical difference was found between the age groups, H2b8 is rejected.

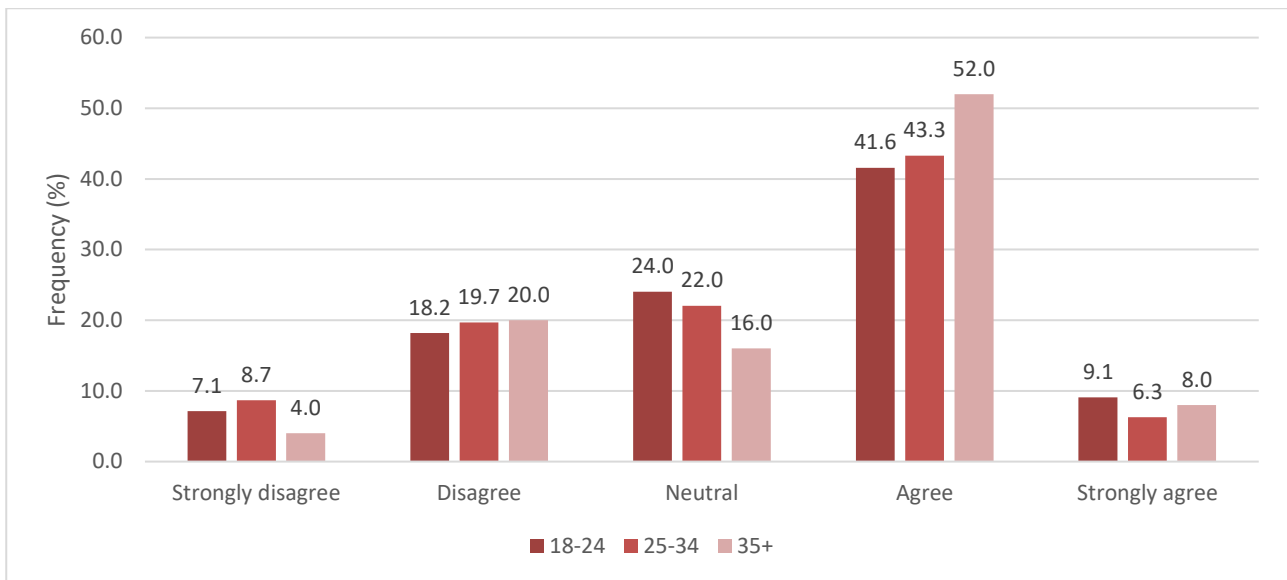


Figure 41. Levels of agreement among age groups regarding the convenience of traditional media in sharing crisis information.

Figure 42, which corresponds to H2b9, presents levels of agreement among age groups that social media are convenient channels. It shows that most respondents within all age groups agreed that social media are convenient crisis communication channels. The agreement is somewhat stronger among respondents aged 25 or above (81.1% of 25-34-year-old respondents and 81.4% of 35+ year-old respondents at least agreed), and weakest among respondents of the youngest age group (64.3% agreed). The differences among age groups are statistically significant ($p = 0.023$). The youngest age group has greater significance from the two older age groups ($p = 0.015$ and $p = 0.013$). H2b9 is therefore confirmed, that younger stakeholders perceive social media to be more convenient channels than traditional media for communicating crises.

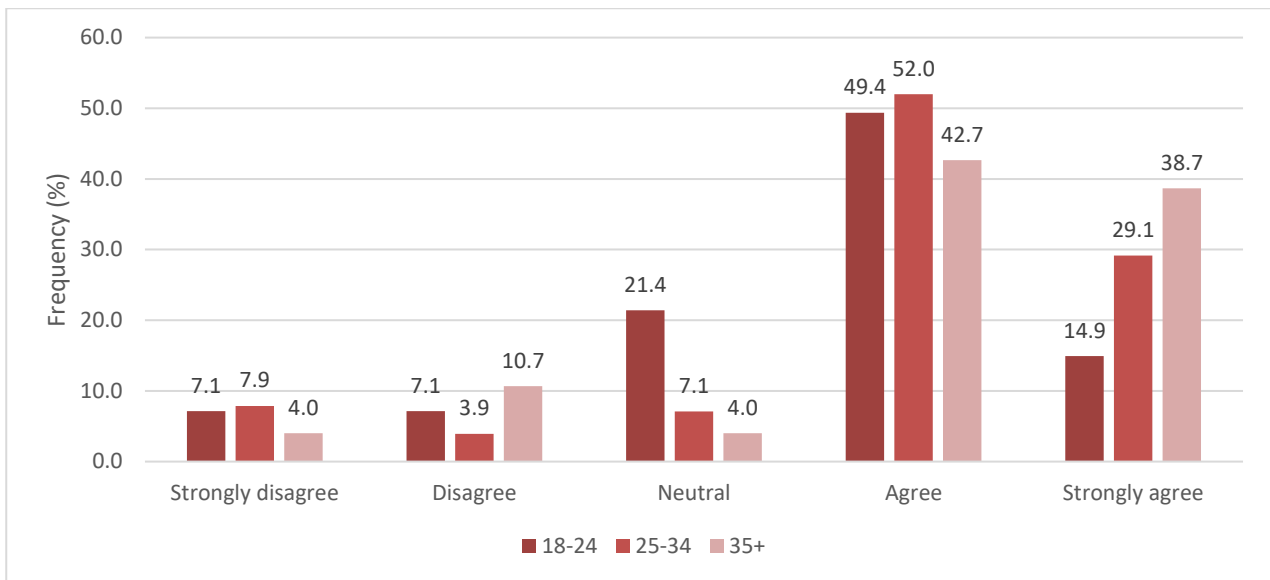


Figure 42. Levels of agreement among age groups regarding the convenience of social media in sharing crisis information.

H2b posited that Vietnamese stakeholders have low trust and appreciation for crisis information that is shared on social media channels. The survey showed that the respondents appreciate social media channels for their fast speed and convenience, but they do not consider these channels to be credible or reliable news sources.

H2b is partially confirmed.

6.2.3. When a crisis starts on a social media channel, most Vietnamese stakeholders expect organizations to respond on that channel.

Questions 9 and 10 asked which channel respondents prefer for crisis communication: “During crises, you expect organizations to share information on traditional media” and “During crises, you expect organizations to share information on social media.” These questions aimed to test H2c, which posited that when a crisis starts on a social media channel, most Vietnamese stakeholders expect organizations to respond on that channel. The respondents were asked to state their levels of agreement regarding whether they expect an organization to respond on each type of communication channel. The assessment was on a scale of 1-5 (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree) as described below. As will be discussed, H2c was confirmed.

As noted earlier, H2c included four sub-hypotheses so that stakeholders’ general preference for crisis response on social media versus traditional media could be tested as well as preferences of different age groups for different channels and agreement regarding whether a social media crisis should receive a response on the same channel on which the crisis began. The four sub-hypotheses are as follows:

- H2c1. Stakeholders prefer a crisis response to be on traditional media compared to social media.
- H2c2. Older stakeholders prefer crisis communication to be on traditional media.
- H2c3. Younger stakeholders prefer crisis communication to be on social media.
- H2c4. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly agree that organizations should respond on the same social media channel on which a crisis started.

As will be discussed, H2c1 was confirmed, that stakeholders expect a crisis response to be on traditional media, but both H2c2 and H2c3 were rejected. Regarding H2c2, both older and younger stakeholders thought that traditional media should be used for crisis communication. Regarding H2c3, the results showed that older participants had a statistically stronger opinion that crisis information should be shared on social media, which was against the original prediction. Lastly, H2c4 was rejected since there was no statistically significant difference in the opinions of younger and older stakeholders. All stakeholders generally agreed that organizations should respond on the same social media channel on which a crisis started.

In more detail, Figure 43, which corresponds to H2c1, presents the overall agreement of respondents about their expected channels for an organization to share crisis information: 71.3% of the respondents at least agreed that during crises, they expect an organization to share information on traditional media, and 63.3% at least agreed that they expect information on social media. The difference was statistically significant, $p = 0.001$. The respondents indicated that they more frequently expect an organization to share crisis communication on traditional media than social media. H2c1 is therefore confirmed.

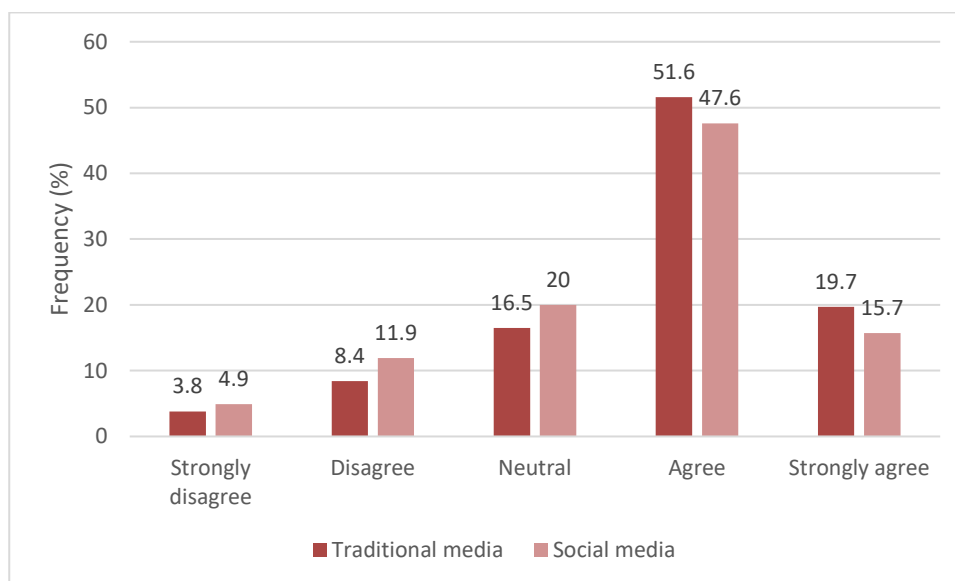


Figure 43. Levels of agreement regarding the expected channel for an organization to share crisis information.

Figure 44, which corresponds to H2c2, presents levels of agreement among age groups that organizations should share crisis information on traditional media. The figure shows that although all three age groups mostly expect crisis information to be shared on traditional media, the opinion is strongest among the oldest respondents (aged 35 or above) with 80% at least agreeing. The youngest respondents (aged 18-24) demonstrated the least agreement that organizations should share crisis information on traditional media with 65.6% agreeing. As no statistically significant difference was found among the different age groups, H2c2 was rejected.

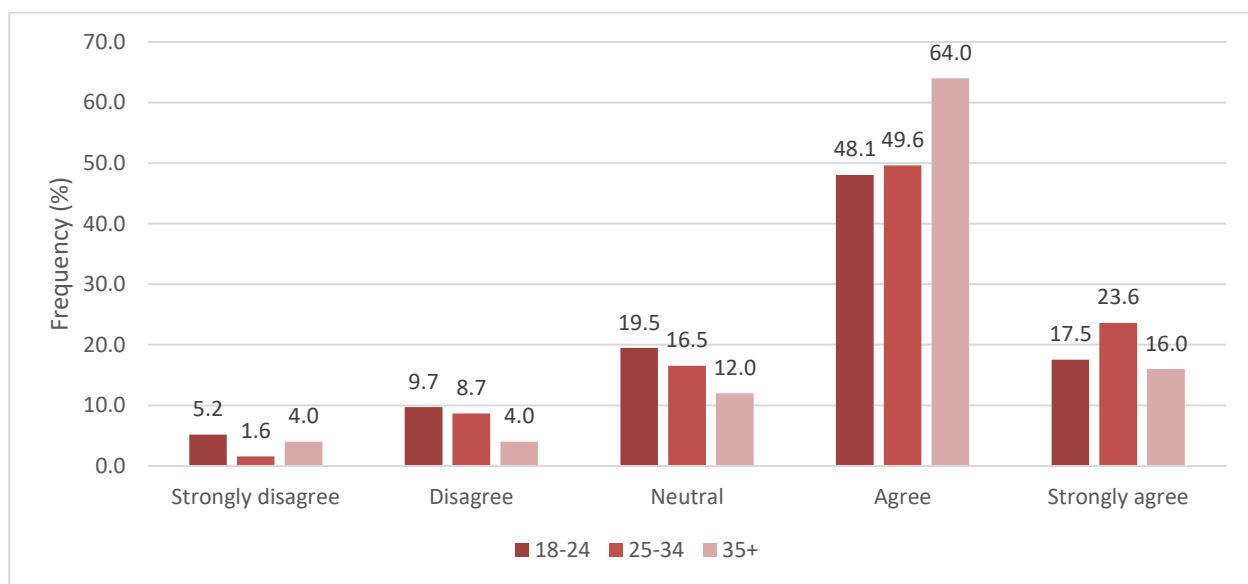


Figure 44. Levels of agreement among age groups that organizations should share crisis information on traditional media.

Figure 45, which corresponds to H2c3, presents levels of agreement among age groups that organizations should share crisis information on social media. Most respondents in all three age groups agreed that organizations should share crisis information on social media. Respondents aged 35 or above had the highest levels of agreement with 70.6% at least agreeing. Respondents aged 24 or under had the lowest levels of agreement with 55.8% agreeing. The differences among age groups were statistically significant ($p = 0.017$). Although there was a statistical difference among age groups, the hypotheses (H2c3) was that younger stakeholders would more strongly agree that crisis information should be shared on social media. This survey found the reverse, that older stakeholders more strongly agreed that crisis information should be shared on social media. It may

be that older stakeholders care more about what is happening in society and therefore think that crisis information should be shared on all channels. Older stakeholders may also have more positive perceptions of social media than do younger stakeholders. H2c3 is therefore rejected.

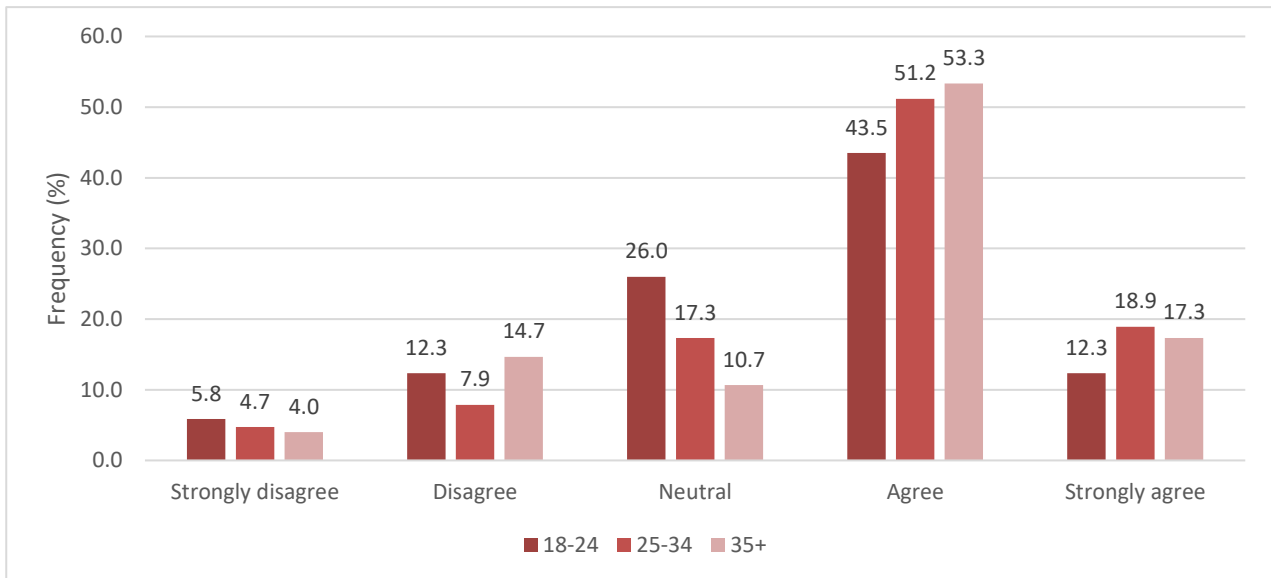


Figure 45. Levels of agreement among age groups that organizations should share crisis information on social media.

In question 11, the respondents were asked, “If a crisis starts on social media, do you expect the involved organization to respond on the same social media channel?” The responses are summarized in Figure 46 below, which corresponds to H2c4.

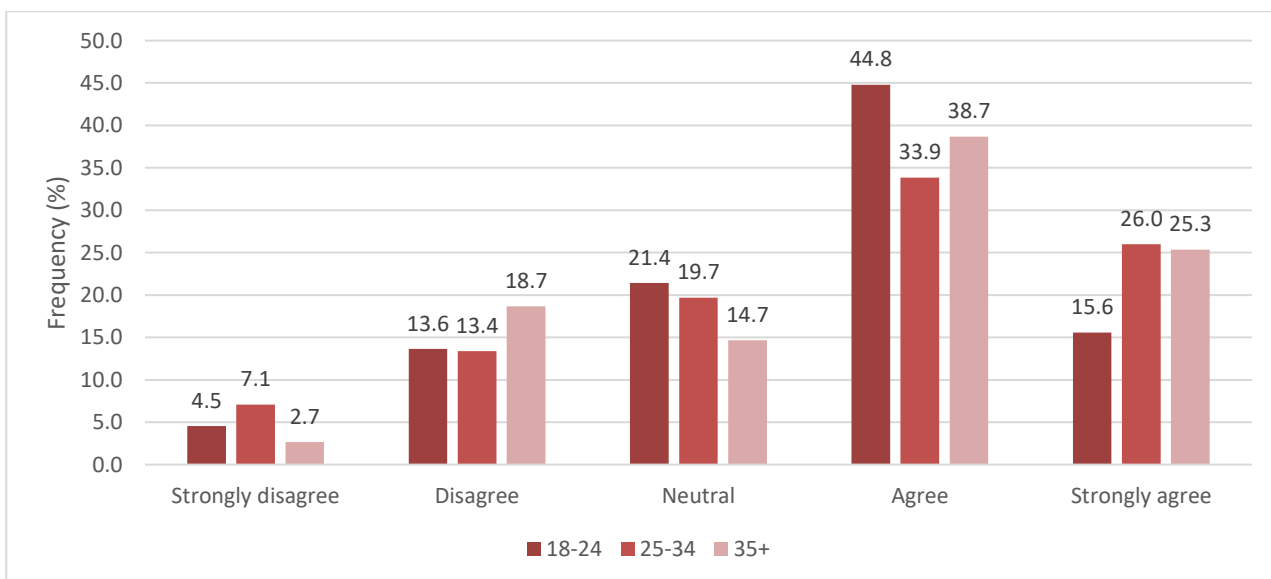


Figure 46. Levels of agreement among age groups that organizations should respond on the same social media channel on which a crisis started.

The result showed that the majority of respondents in all three age groups at least agreed that if a crisis starts on social media, an organization should respond on the same social media channel. The agreement was strongest among older respondents who were aged 35 or above (64% of these respondents at least agreed). Nonetheless, as noted earlier, there was no statistical difference across the age groups so H2c4 is rejected.

H2c posited that during crises, Vietnamese stakeholders expect organizations to respond on the same social media channel on which a crisis started. The survey showed that stakeholders expect an organization to share crisis information on traditional media. However, if a crisis started on social media, they would expect an organization to respond on the same social media channel.

H2c is confirmed.

6.2.4. In Vietnam, when an organization responds to a crisis on social media, older stakeholders think that the organization would be more caring and willing to engage in dialogue.

Questions 12-14 most directly test the results of NCCT which are considered in H2d. This hypothesis said that when an organization responds to a crisis on social media, most stakeholders will perceive the organization to be sincere, caring, and willing to engage in dialogue. In these questions, respondents were asked how they would perceive an organization's effort if it responded to a crisis on social media. Suggested perceptions were that the organization would be sincere, caring, and willing to have a dialogue, and the answers are presented in Figure 47. As will be discussed, H2d was partly confirmed since only the older stakeholders perceived that an organization would be more caring and willing to engage in dialogue if the organization responded on social media. The findings lend some support to NCCT.

Assessing the results overall, respondents were generally positive toward organizations that used social media for crisis response: 66.5% of the respondents at least agreed that they would perceive the organization as caring and 68.1% at least agreed that they would perceive the organization as willing to have a dialogue. On the other hand, the "being sincere" perception did not receive much agreement. Only 37.4% of the respondents at least agreed that they would perceive the organization as sincere. Nonetheless, the results overall indicate that respondents favor organizations using social media and welcome organizations' efforts to solve issues. Details on each perception are presented in the Figure 47.

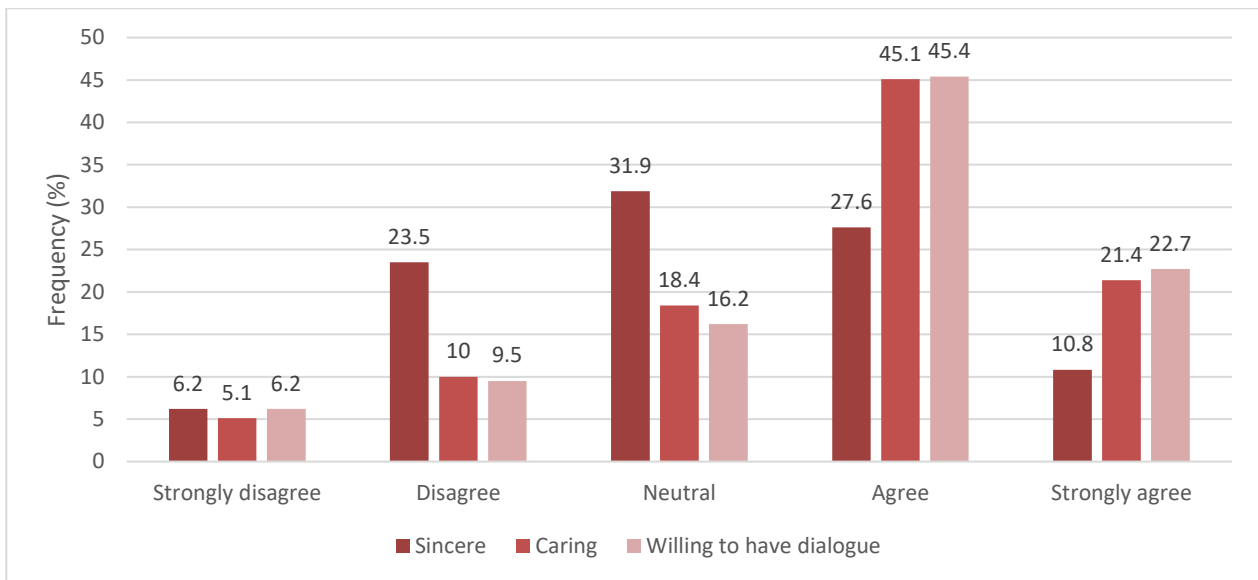


Figure 47. Levels of agreement among age groups that stakeholders would perceive an organization to be sincere, caring, or willing to have a dialogue if it used social media for crisis response.

H2d posited that in Vietnam, most stakeholders would perceive an organization to be sincere, caring, and willing to engage in dialogue if it responded on social media. The survey showed that most Vietnamese stakeholders perceive organizations to be caring and willing to have a dialogue when they use social media for crisis response. However, most did not perceive organizations that use social media for this purpose to be sincere.

H2d is partly confirmed.

As presented earlier, *H2d* was further divided into three sub-hypotheses to test differences in perceptions between older and younger stakeholders as follows:

- *H2d1.* Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly perceive that organizations using social media for crisis response are more sincere.
- *H2d2.* Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly perceive that organizations using social media for crisis response are more caring.
- *H2d3.* Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly perceive that organizations using social media for crisis response are more willing to engage in dialogue.

Figure 48, which corresponds to *H2d1*, presents answers for question 12, “If an organization responds quickly and directly through social media, you would be more likely to believe that the organization is sincere. Communicating directly means that the organization skips the step of journalistic gatekeeping to deliver personalized messages.” The results indicate that younger respondents have split opinions on the sincerity of an organization that uses social media for crisis

response. Respondents in the 18-24 age group and 25-34 age group had a significant number of respondents who did not have a clear reaction and chose a “neutral” response (35.1% and 34.6% respectively). Both groups also had similar levels of disagreement and agreement to the sincerity statement. In contrast, many older respondents (48% of respondents aged 35 or above) at least agreed that if an organization used social media for crisis communication, stakeholders may think it is sincere. As there is no statistically significant difference in responses across the age groups, H2d1 is rejected.

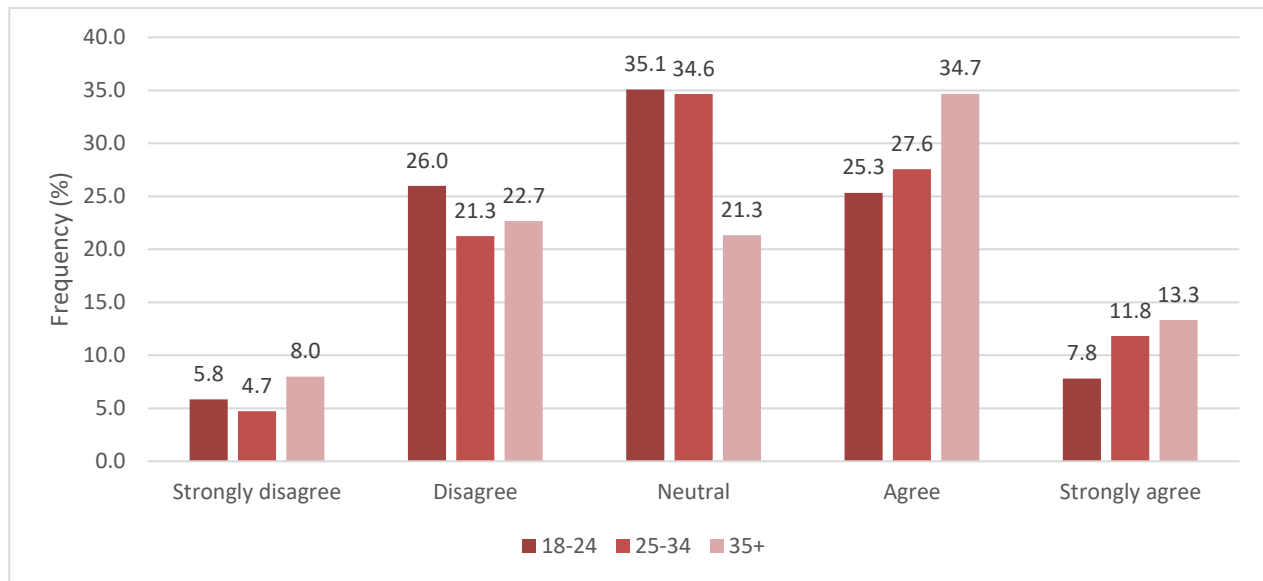


Figure 48. Levels of agreement among age groups that stakeholders would perceive an organization to be sincere if it used social media for crisis response.

Figure 49, which corresponds to H2d2, presents answers for question 13, “If an organization responds quickly and directly through social media, you would be more likely to believe that the organization cares about its stakeholders.” More than 55% of respondents in all three age groups expressed that they would perceive an organization to be caring if it used social media for crisis response. It is noticeable that older respondents (aged 35 or above) were much firmer in their responses, with one-third (33.3%) strongly agreeing that such an organization would be caring. The differences among age groups were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Followed up pairwise comparisons showed that the difference between the 18-24 age group and the 35+ age group was more significant than the other two pairs ($p = 0.001$). H2d2, however, is rejected since it was hypothesized that younger stakeholders, not older stakeholders, would perceive that organizations using social media for crisis communication are more caring. As discussed earlier, this reversal of expectations may have occurred because older stakeholders believe that any sharing of crisis

communication on any channel demonstrates that an organization is more caring of its stakeholders. Older stakeholders may also have more positive perceptions of social media.

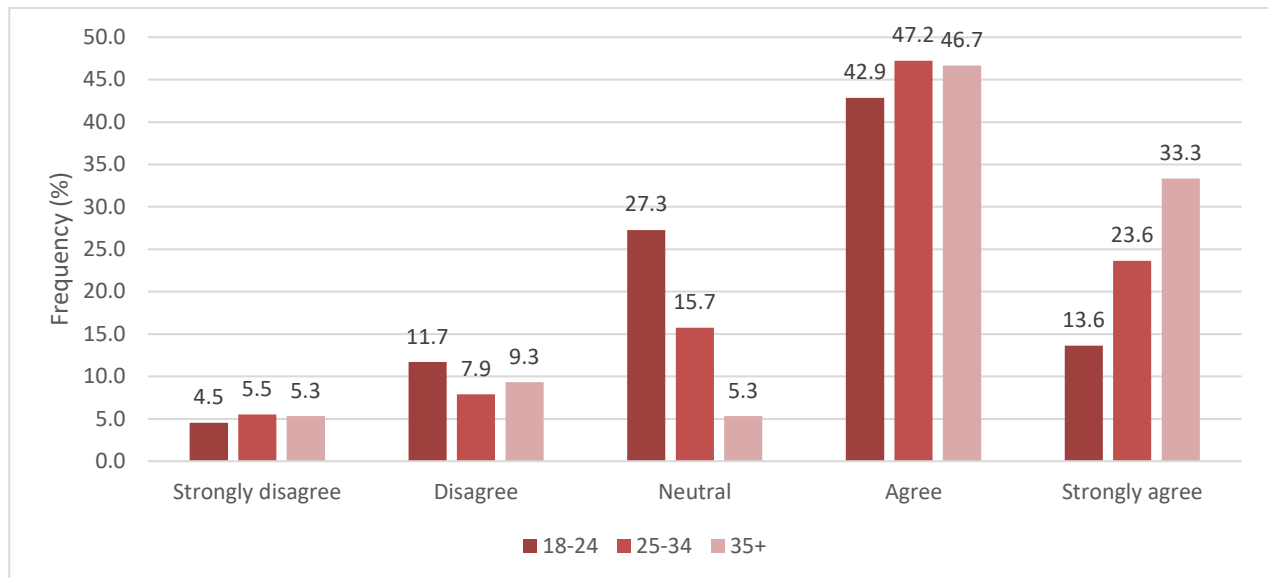


Figure 49. Levels of agreement among age groups that stakeholders would perceive an organization to be caring if it used social media for crisis response.

Figure 50 presents answers for question 14, “If an organization responds quickly and directly through social media, you would be more likely to believe that the organization is willing to have a dialogue with the stakeholders.” Similar to the results above, 76% of the oldest respondent group at least agreed that an organization would be perceived as willing to have a dialogue if it used social media for crisis response, with 32% strongly agreeing. Other age groups also agreed with this statement but to lesser degrees (61.7% and 73.2% respectively at least agreed). The differences among age groups were statistically significant ($p = 0.010$). In general, older respondents (aged 35 or above) indicated that they would highly appreciate an organization’s effort to communicate on social media during crises. H2d3 is therefore rejected as it is the older stakeholders, not the younger, who believe that organizations using social media for crisis communication are more willing to engage in dialogue. Again, this reversal of expectations may have occurred because older stakeholders think that any communication on any channel from an organization about its crisis indicates a willingness on the part of the organization to engage in dialogue and older stakeholders generally have more positive perceptions of information on social media.

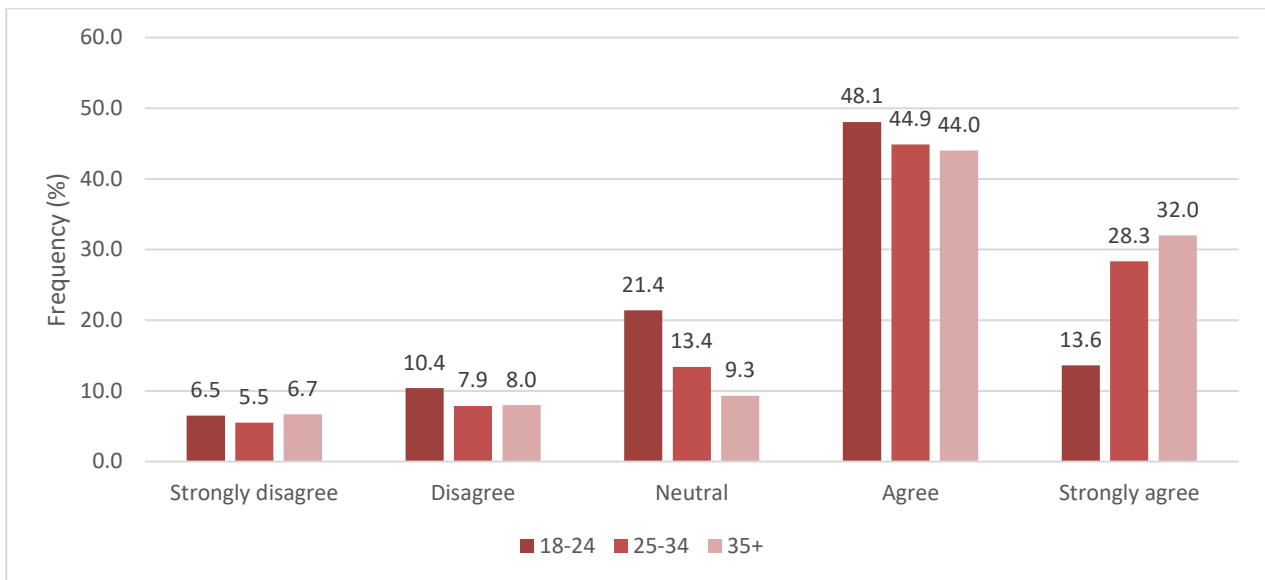


Figure 50. Levels of agreement among age groups that stakeholders would perceive an organization to be willing to engage in dialogue if it used social media for crisis response.

6.2.5. In Vietnam, older stakeholders are more likely to stop sharing bad news and support an organization if it uses social media for crisis response.

Questions 15 and 16 of the survey also aimed to test the findings of NCCT regarding whether stakeholder would stop sharing bad news and support an organization if it used social media for crisis response. In these questions, respondents were asked how they would react to organizations that use social media for crisis response. The assessment is on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questions tested H2e, which posited that most stakeholders believe that if an organization responds to crises on social media, they would not talk badly about or boycott the organization, and they would support the organization after the crisis. Although H2e was rejected, when results were compared across age groups, it was found that older stakeholders were statistically more likely to stop talking badly about an organization and support an organization if it used social media for crisis response. This finding again lends some support to NCCT. The fact that at least one group of stakeholders would stop sharing bad news and support an organization if it used social media for crisis response indicates that organizations should use traditional and social media simultaneously in crisis response as recommended by NCCT.

In more detail, Figure 51 presents overall reactions to an organization that used social media for crisis response. For the “stop sharing bad news or talking badly” dimension, only 35.1% of the respondents at least agreed, while 41.1% were neutral and 23.8% at least disagreed. Similarly, for the “support the organization after the crisis” dimension, only 35.7% of the respondents at least agreed, while 44.3% were neutral to the statement, and 19.0% at least disagreed.

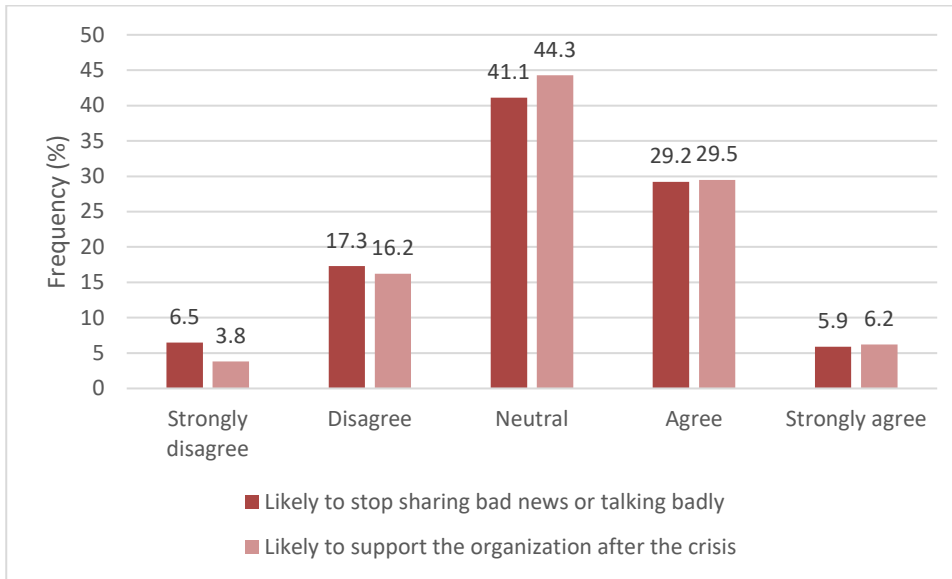


Figure 51. Levels of agreement regarding stakeholder secondary crisis reactions if an organization used social media for crisis response.

H2e posited that in Vietnam, most stakeholders would not engage in secondary crisis reactions and would support an organization after a crisis if it responded to a crisis on social media. While the survey focused more on what stakeholders said they would do during crises and not on their actual actions, the results still indicate that most stakeholders would not provide any supportive reactions towards organizations that used social media for crisis communication.

H2e is rejected.

As noted earlier, *H2e* was further broken down into two sub-hypotheses to test responses across age groups:

- *H2e1*. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will be more likely to stop sharing bad news or talking badly about an organization if it uses social media for crisis response.
- *H2e2*. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will be more likely to support an organization if it uses social media for crisis response.

These hypotheses, which relied on questions 15-16 showed statistically significant differences.

Figure 52, which corresponds to *H2e1*, compares answers among age groups for question 15, “If an organization responded quickly and directly through social media, you would be more likely to stop sharing bad news or talking badly about the organization.” The results show that respondents aged 34 or below were impartial to organizations that use social media for crisis

response, with 48.1% and 42.5% of the younger age groups neither agreeing nor disagreeing. They expressed that they are neither more nor less likely to stop sharing bad news or talking badly about such organizations. In contrast, older respondents reported that they would be likely to stop reacting negatively. The level of agreement increased as the age of respondents increased, peaking with 57.3% of respondents aged 35 or above agreeing that they would stop these secondary crisis reactions. The differences among age groups were statistically significant ($p = 0.014$). H2e1, however, is rejected as it predicted that younger, not older, stakeholders would be more likely to express that they would stop sharing bad news or talking badly about organizations that use social media to communicate crises. This result, again, may reflect older stakeholders' goodwill towards organizations willing to communicate their crisis information via any channel or specifically older stakeholders favorable attitude toward organizations that are willing to communicate their crises on the open channels of social media.

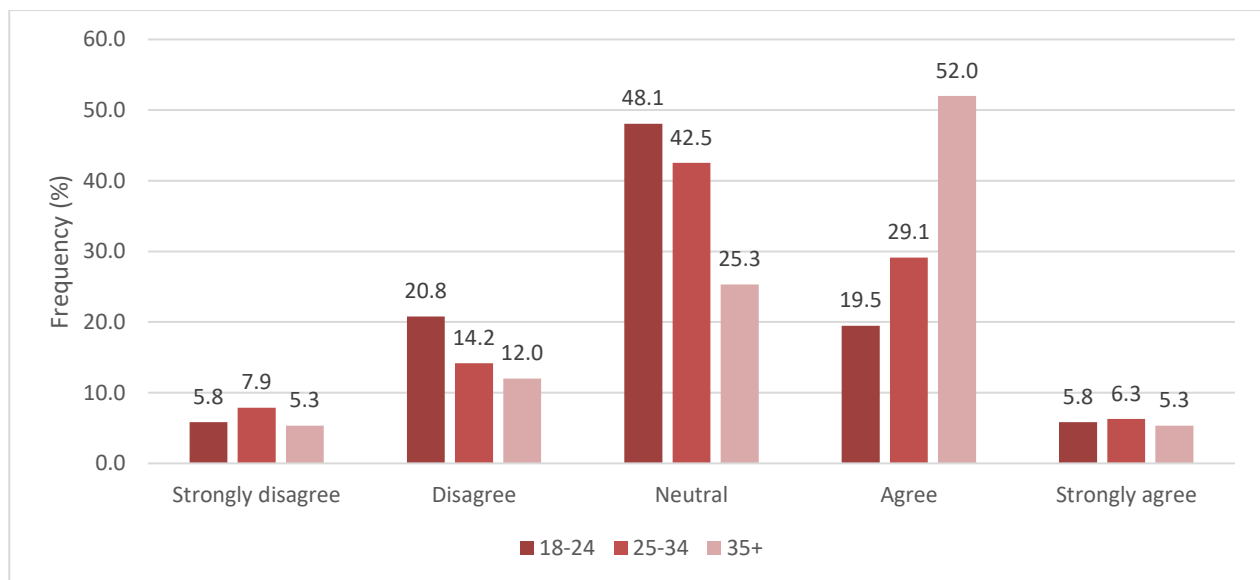


Figure 52. Levels of agreement among age groups that stakeholders are likely to stop sharing bad news or talking badly about an organization if it used social media for crisis response.

Figure 53, which corresponds to H2e2, presents answers among age groups to question 16, “If an organization responded quickly and directly through social media, you would be more likely to support the organization after the crisis.” Similar to the above results, respondents aged 34 or below were impartial, with 51.3% and 46.5% of the younger age groups neither agreeing nor disagreeing. They indicated that they are neither more nor less likely to support an organization after the crisis. In contrast, older respondents reported that they would be likely to support these organizations, with 62.7% of respondents aged 35 or above reporting agreement. The differences

among age groups were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Post hoc Wilcoxon test showed that the differences between the 35+ age group and the younger groups were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$ and $p = 0.001$). Although H2e2 is rejected, it was found that older stakeholders are more likely to support organizations that communicate their crises on social media. It may be that older stakeholders are more likely to support any organization that is willing to communicate its crisis on any channel, not just social media. Again, this finding lends support for NCCT.

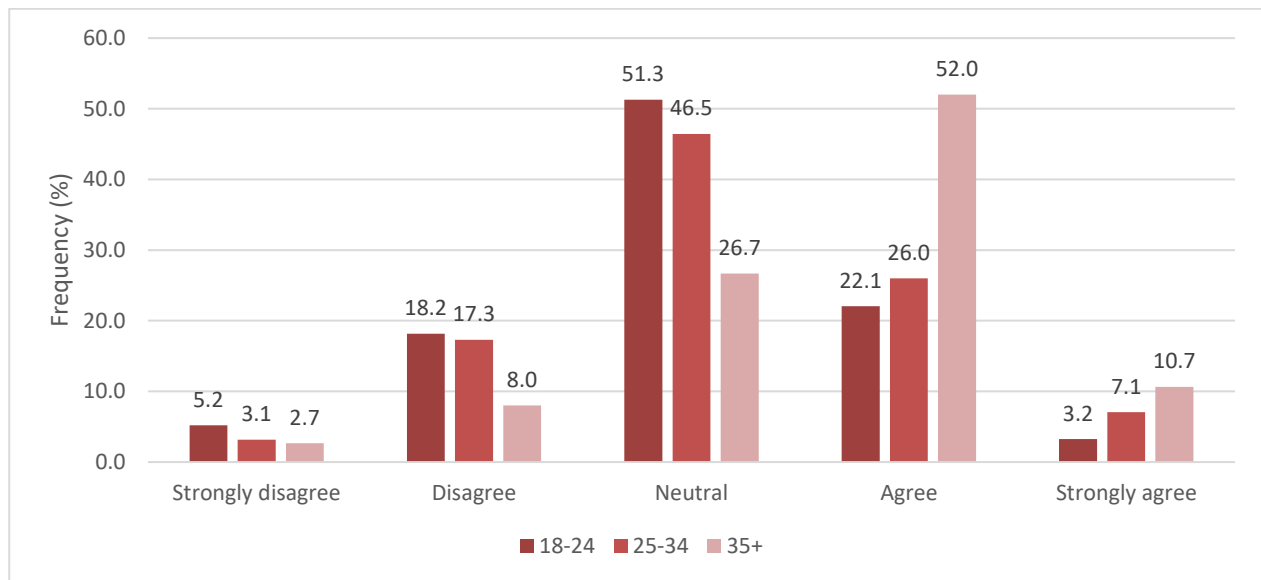


Figure 53. Levels of agreement among stakeholder age groups that they would be likely to support an organization that used social media for crisis response.

6.2.6. Organizations usually solve crises with silence or hide the truth.

In the open-ended section, some respondents said that they prefer organizations to offer an apology and a solution, rather than trying to buy time or to temporarily calm stakeholders. This finding places importance on the message sent rather than the channel. At the same time, they also indicated that most organizations are not willing to solve their crises. Specifically, some respondents indicated that organizations try to hide their crises and make stakeholders think that the crisis has gone away:

I think organizations always solve crises with silence, no matter how big or serious a crisis is. Usually, there is no one from a company to admit responsibility or extend an official apology. Vietnamese people tend to be forgetful as we are exposed to too much information in any day. Thus, over time, we can forget about a crisis, and that's what the company is waiting for. – A 32-year-old male respondent.

If an organization is found responsible for a crisis, it usually hides the truth and only provides minimal information, just enough to make the impression that they responded. – A 27-year-old female respondent.

In conclusion, six out of 17 respondents of the open-ended section showed their discontent with current crisis communication practice in Vietnam, mentioning that most organizations are unwilling to solve a crisis properly. These findings indicate that public relations in Vietnam still largely follows Grunig and Hunt's (1984) first model, which is press agency.

6.2.7. While traditional media is regarded as more credible than social media, stakeholders still show a lack of trust regarding news on traditional media.

In the open-ended section, another theme emerged regarding the credibility of communication channels. As mentioned previously, 42.7% of respondents disagreed that social media is reliable, and three respondents elaborated upon this unreliability:

Crises on social media usually start with someone claiming him- or herself as an industry insider and wanting to whistle-blow. The information then is shared here and there, and accumulatively added by who-knows-who, making the whole issue somewhat of a mess. I think this uncontrolled news flow makes the news receivers more superficial and passive as they cannot trust what they see or hear. – A 21-year-old female respondent.

Similarly, while traditional media is regarded as more credible than social media, ten out of 62 respondents who replied to the open-ended question expressed disappointment in the ethics and current practice of traditional media agencies:

Crisis information in Vietnam is biased. Those with money can somehow manipulate traditional media. Even if a crisis is disclosed by the media, the company can use their money to stop the story. – A 24-year-old male respondent.

Traditional media nowadays focuses on scandalous news. News like that is aired too frequently, too fast, and sometimes the information is misleading or unverified. The news receivers can't recognize which piece of news is truthful and which piece is fabricated. Some people think that media is in a setback and reading news is nothing more than a daily routine. – A 21-year-old female respondent.

Traditional media is government-owned and heavily censored and directed. Thus, information in traditional media only reflects part of the story. – A 37-year-old male respondent.

In general, most respondents expressed their general unease about crisis communication ethics and news channels in Vietnam, and expressed that there should be a drastic change in

Vietnam's communication practice during crises. Respondents did not offer a preference regarding news channels.

This dissertation now turns to the discussion of phase 1 results. From the results of survey (1b) with public relations practitioners and (2b) with stakeholders, the following chapter discusses similarities and differences in perceptions of social media use in crisis communication between organizations and stakeholders.

Chapter 7: Comparison of Phase 1 and Phase 2 Results

This chapter compares the results from the phase 1 interviews and phase 2 surveys to consider their similarities and differences. From this comparison, questions for the phase 3 final set of interviews (1c) with another group of public relations practitioners generated to further explain the findings of phases 1 and 2.

7.1. Similarities in Perceptions on Social Media Use in Crisis Communication between Public Relations Practitioners and Stakeholders

To review, stakeholder communication is an important aspect of business in Vietnam (Mak, 2009). Stakeholder communication is used not only to meet the immediate needs of important stakeholders, but also to fulfill an organization's desire for appreciation and reputation (Mak, 2009). According to Vietnam Report (2015), an annual report on reputation ranking of Vietnamese businesses, Vietnamese organizations have shown initiatives in information sharing and diversity in communication channels to keep up with their stakeholders' preferences and have increasingly paid more time and attention to their stakeholders to maintain their reputation (Vietnam Report, 2015). In times of crises, the role of stakeholder communication is under even more focus. Angry stakeholders are the generators and amplifiers of crises, and through social media, they have become more empowered and have asserted more pressure on organizations (Coombs, 2014). Thus, by comparing the results between public relations practitioners (group 1) and organizational stakeholders (group 2), this research looks to explore the similarities and differences in perceptions of social media use in crisis communication between the two groups and how Vietnamese organizations can better meet the needs of their stakeholders.

7.1.1. Timeliness of crisis response is under mutual focus.

In interview (2a) with stakeholders, when asked about their preferences for a good crisis response, six out of 13 participants picked the speed of response as their top priority. Although this timeliness of crisis response was not as valued as the officiality in crisis information in survey (2b), more than one-third of the survey participants still expected a timely response.

This stakeholder expectation of receiving a timely response is recognized by Vietnamese public relations practitioners. As found in interview (1a), practitioners typically consider how quickly a message must be sent when selecting a crisis communication channel. When speed is the most important criteria for a response, social media channels should certainly play a role in communication. However, while social media channels offer greater speed than traditional channels, speed is not the only requirement for an effective response and should be balanced against other considerations.

7.1.2. A combined use of social media and traditional media in crisis communication is a mutual expectation.

As seen in the results of interview (1a) and survey (1b), Vietnamese public relations practitioners typically consider the preferences of their stakeholders and the characteristics of each crisis when selecting communication channels. To meet more stakeholder preferences, many practitioners expressed that using a combination of traditional and social media would strengthen the response.

Using both types of media corresponds with the expectations of stakeholders and the recommendations of NCCT. In interview (2a), all 13 participants mentioned that social media alone cannot make a good response. Social media must be used together with other communication tools to reach all stakeholder groups and to maximize the credibility and effectiveness of the crisis management plan. In brief, a combined use of social media and traditional media in crisis communication is a mutual expectation of Vietnamese organizations and stakeholders.

7.1.3. Vietnamese organizations do not use social media effectively in crisis communication.

Another similarity in the perceptions of organizations and stakeholders on social media use in crisis communication is that Vietnamese organizations do not know how to handle social media during crises. The participants of interview (1a) stated that their organizations have doubts about the ability of their companies, teams or agencies to handle crises effectively on social media. As practitioners feel uneasy over the speed and uncontrollability of content on social media, they lack confidence in their ability to keep up with the information flow or manage a crisis tactfully. Likewise, in interview (2a), none of the 13 participants expressed that they had seen effective use of social media in crisis responses. The participants indicated that they do not think Vietnamese organizations in general can respond effectively to crises, and they are especially unable to do so using social media.

This finding suggests that social media use in crisis communication in Vietnam is still in its nascent stage with lack of confidence from the practitioners and organizations and low level of trust from the stakeholders. Thus, there is a need for public relations practitioners to improve both their social media use and crisis communication practice.

7.2. Differences in Perceptions of Social Media Use in Crisis Communication between Vietnamese Public Relations Practitioners and Stakeholders

Differences in perceptions of public relations practitioners and stakeholders regarding social media use during crisis communication were drawn by comparing answers of the two groups from phase 1.

7.2.1. Most Vietnamese organizations misunderstand which channels stakeholders prefer for crisis communication.

While results of the practitioner interviews and surveys indicated that most practitioners believe that stakeholders would prefer to receive crisis responses through social media, stakeholders generally said the opposite. As discussed, in the stakeholder interviews, ten out of the 13 participants said that they prefer to receive crisis information through traditional media because they perceive information on these channels to be more credible. The stakeholder survey provided similar results to the interviews: 71.3% of the respondents at least agreed that during crises, they expect organizations to share information on traditional media. Regarding credibility of the channels, while 54.6% of the respondents at least agreed that traditional media are credible, only 31.8% of respondents at least agreed that social media are credible. Further, 42.7% thought that social media are not credible. However, just because social media channels are not perceived to be as credible as traditional channels, does not mean that social media channels should be avoided for crisis response. The finding indicates that for many crises, social media channels should be used as additional channels after a crisis is communicated on traditional media. Also, practitioners should review stakeholder preferences to re-evaluate their crisis communication plans.

7.2.2. Most Vietnamese organizations misunderstand the perceptions that older stakeholders have of social media.

In interview (1a) and survey (1b) with public relations practitioners, the participants stated that they consider the demographics of stakeholders in determining which channels to use. Ten participants expressed that social media channels are more suitable for communicating with younger stakeholders. However, survey (2b) showed that respondents aged 25 and above have similar perceptions about social media to those of younger age groups, and respondents aged 35 and above favored social media even more than the younger participants. The survey results also indicated that many older stakeholders perceive social media channels to be credible, quick and convenient. Further, according to the survey, if a crisis started on social media, most older stakeholders would expect organizations to respond on the same social media channel, as these stakeholders think a crisis response on social media shows that an organization is caring. Further, most stakeholders aged 35 or above agreed that they would stop criticizing or sharing bad news about an organization that responded on social media compared to younger stakeholders. Most of the older stakeholders compared to those younger also reported that after a crisis, they would be more likely to support an organization that responded on social media.

The above findings suggest that if an older stakeholder uses social media, he or she would think more highly of these channels and the organizations that use them than would younger

stakeholders. Therefore, crisis communicators should continue exploring this perception and use social media for all stakeholders, not only younger stakeholders.

7.2.3. While stakeholders expect a sincere and accommodative crisis response, Vietnamese organizations underappreciate this approach.

In interview (2a) with stakeholders, five participants said that they expected organizations to show sincerity and responsibility regarding crises, and not avoid or deny any issues. The participants mentioned that they would look more at the nature of response content and reaction than what channel was used for the response. Looking at the organizational side of crisis communication, however, this study found that the public relations practitioners usually underappreciate stakeholder expectations for sincere content. In interviews with public relations practitioners (1a), only three out of 12 participants discussed the content of a crisis response. Further, while the public relations practitioners still think that being honest, sincere and taking responsibility works best with stakeholders, they said that their organizations often overlook and underuse these strategies. Therefore, this finding suggests there is a need for a review of crisis communication strategy in most Vietnamese organizations to further plan how they can act and respond more honestly and sincerely during crises.

Reflecting on Ulmer et al. (2014), in times of crises, an organization should acknowledge its audiences and create dialogue and find solutions with them. Additionally, it is fundamental that an organization be open to audiences and share knowledge about a crisis and plans to contain it. The communication must be people-centered, and express care, concern, compassion and empathy. All the reviewed literature emphasized the value of sincerity and accommodative content in crisis communication.

Further, regarding how a crisis communication should be crafted, an appropriate choice of communication channel alone cannot help minimize the damage or maintain an organization's reputation. The channel must be used in combination with clear response content to influence stakeholders' perceptions and rebuild or promote organizational reputation (Stephens et al., 2005; Coombs, 2014).

7.2.4. Summary

With these results and discussion points in mind, the researcher conducted another set of interviews with Vietnamese public relations practitioners, noted as interview (1c) of phase 3. The purpose of these interviews was to provide more in-depth detail for different results from phases 1 and 2 as well as suggest some rationale behind those results. The design of this interview was previously presented in Chapter 4, Methodology.

Chapter 8: Phase 3 – Results and Discussion of Qualitative Interview (1c)

This chapter presents key themes arising from phase 3, interview (1c), which was conducted with 12 Vietnamese public relations practitioners who participated in the study for the first time. As presented previously, the aim of phase 3 was to ask practitioner about apparent contradictions between practitioner and stakeholder perceptions of social media for crisis communication as found when comparing the phase 1 and phase 2 results and to delve more deeply into some issues. To review, in phase 3, participants were asked questions about the relative advantages of social media compared to traditional media for crisis communication, trust in social media, general content strategy for crisis communication among Vietnamese organizations, and the focus of Vietnam's public relations on promotion and marketing rather than reputation and crisis management.

Participants in this set of interviews were as follows:

Table 10

Participants of Interview (1c)

Code name	Place of public relations practice	Years of experience
1M	Agency	4
1N	In-house	7
1O	Agency	5
1P	Agency	8
1Q	Agency	5
1R	Agency	10
1S	In-house	10
1T	Agency	8
1U	Agency	20
1V	In-house	8
1W	In-house	7
1X	Agency	5

8.1. Vietnamese Public Relations Practitioners Think That Social Media Offers Greater Transparency Compared to Traditional Media, Has a Wider and Faster Reach, and Allows Practitioners to Quickly Check Stakeholder Reactions

Continuing from phase 1, the interviews in phase 3 asked participants what they thought were the advantages of social media as crisis communication channels compared to traditional media.

Two participants said that social media have greater transparency and a wider and faster reach, which together help spread a crisis response message instantly to reassure the public:

Compared to traditional media, social media has other advantages when solving crises.

First, it allows for direct, transparent communication with the target audience.

Transparency is the top concern when we spread crisis information to customers. Because traditional media is controlled, edited and has its own agenda, when we need to approach a large audience, we choose social media. Especially, at this period, social media is seen as an official place for people to seek information, so social media gains a fair amount of trust.

– Participant 1N, an in-house practitioner with seven years of experience.

We can see that news both good and bad can spread very quickly on social media. For example, imagine that the judges and investigators in the Khai Silk case conclude that the company is innocent. Khai Silk can then advertise this news in the press. They can even advertise on their website or hold a press conference. But the fastest, cheapest and most effective way to reassure customers is to bring that information to Facebook... Facebook acts as a channel to reach millions of people, possibly all Vietnam, and if we have enough funding, it will even be able to reach all kinds of people. – Participant 1U, an agency practitioner with 20 years of experience.

Four other participants said that social media allows public relations practitioners to quickly see how stakeholders react to messages. When using social media for crisis communication, it is quick and easy to see how the stakeholders receive and reply to an organization's response:

With social media, it's easy to see the results. Social media helps you to check the feedback of the stakeholders... Social listening helps you check all the problems that stakeholders are complaining about. In the past, stakeholders went to forums or small communities to share; and now social media is a public place, so we can check how they feel about a brand or company more easily. And from that information, I can evaluate whether the campaigns that we are doing are really influencing the stakeholders, and what we can do to improve our communication. – Participant 1Q, an agency practitioner with five years of experience.

Altogether, the participating public relations practitioners perceived that social media have some advantages over traditional media in crisis communication. The advantages that these participants mentioned are greater transparency, a wider and faster reach, and the ability to check how stakeholders are reacting to crisis messages and to adjust the messages if necessary. Therefore, as found in phase 1, practitioners can use social media in all three phases of crisis communication.

8.2. Vietnamese Public Relations Practitioners Think That the Main Disadvantage of Social Media is Its Complexity

All 12 participants stated that it is difficult for a Vietnamese organization to respond to a crisis through social media because organizations do not have enough resources to communicate with stakeholders on all channels and would need highly trained staff to respond to negative comments. They explained that social media has too many channels for crisis communicators to maintain an active presence on all of them. They also explained that the conversations are often so negative that the company would need extremely carefully trained and experienced individuals to handle messages on all these channels. In other words, they are unable to control the spread of negative information:

It is hard to use social media as it has many different channels and all those channels are public. During a crisis, there can be negative, contradictory or inflamed conversations on social media. A crisis communicator would need to be trained carefully or equipped with years of experience to deal with this effectively. – Participant 1T, an agency practitioner with eight years of experience.

I think social media is not something we can try, or should try, during crises. Social media is not a solution to crisis communication. If we responded to a crisis on social media, everyone could comment on it or share it. We would not be able to control those comments and shares. Are the comments negative or offensive? Are they accurate? We could try to delete the comments, but the stakeholders would notice and question why the comments were deleted. If we tried to use social media, and used it ineffectively, there'd be no return for us. – Participant 1M, an agency practitioner with four years of experience.

To summarize, Vietnamese public relations practitioners think that the main disadvantage of social media is its complexity, which means that social media have too many channels and flows of information, making it complicated to fully control. As well, conversations are often very negative. These reasons help to explain why many Vietnamese organizations still prefer traditional media for crisis communication.

8.3. Vietnamese Public Relations Practitioners Who Had Not Encountered a Crisis Were More Open to the Idea of Using Social Media in Crisis Response Than Practitioners Who Had

The researcher asked participants if they had encountered any crisis, and how social media would have helped in crisis response. The researcher defined a big crisis as one that escalates quickly and affects an organization's reputation for at least three months, while a small crisis was defined as one that could escalate but is contained in time and affects an organization's reputation for a shorter time. Among the participants, one had encountered big crises, eight had encountered

small crises, and three had never encountered a crisis. All three of these latter participants said that they would use social media in crisis response, especially if a crisis started on social media. In such a case, they said they would choose social media to be the main communication channel:

Now, reporters from different news outlets each have Facebook accounts. For a long time, they have found news on social media. If there is a crisis, they know that social media will be the place for it to spread out... For any crisis that occurs at this time, I prefer to use Facebook to handle it because it links to the press and the authorities. – Participant 1U, an agency practitioner with 20 years of experience.

In contrast, participants who had previously encountered crises did not think highly of using social media in crisis response. Five of them, including the one who had managed big crises, said that they would try to take the crisis offline, away from social media:

I faced lots of crises in real estate and fast-moving consumer goods industry. I use traditional media channels to handle crises. I do not use social media... Social media only spread information, but when people search for news, they still choose to read the traditional media. Traditional media have a certain level of credibility and have the voice of authority. – Participant 1T, an agency practitioner with eight years of experience.

The other five participants who had faced a crisis shared that they would only use social media if a crisis started on social media. If possible, their strategy would be to try to delete or suppress the negative information on social media:

In the past five years, I have dealt with several risks and crises. Generally, I first listen to the source of information, then counteract the negative information by seeding positive news on traditional and social media sources. I also contact the social media's administrator or moderator or the sources of the negative post to remove that post. If we cannot remove the post, then at least we can remove the company name. – Participant 1V, an in-house practitioner with eight years of experience.

I usually use trustworthy news outlets like Thanh Nien and Tuoi Tre to communicate about a crisis. They have a credible voice to the public and can convey our official messages. I only use social media if the crisis started on it. I understand if we do not handle a crisis promptly, the information will spread really fast, so I will respond on the social channels immediately to try to control the problem first, before using traditional media. – Participant 1O, an agency practitioner with five years of experience.

In summary, interview (1c) established that Vietnamese public relations practitioners who had not encountered a crisis were more open to using social media in a crisis. In contrast, Vietnamese public relations practitioners who had encountered a crisis would seed both social and

traditional media with positive comments, try to take a crisis response away from social media, try to delete negative comments or at least their organization's name from the comments, or would only use social media if a crisis started on social media. In summary, practitioners used different strategies for responding to crises on social media.

8.4. Vietnamese Organizations Believe That Although Stakeholders May Not Trust Information on Social Media, They Still Use Social Media During Crises

Phase 1 results found that Vietnamese stakeholders generally use traditional media more than social media to seek and share crisis information, and that Vietnamese stakeholders generally do not trust crisis information shared on social media channels. In phase 3, the researcher asked what the participants thought about these findings and if the findings would make them plan their crisis communication any differently. The results were mixed.

The participants who agreed with the phase 1 results thought that Vietnamese stakeholders now understand social media well enough to know that these channels are not credible. Therefore, stakeholders refer to traditional media for serious information such as crises:

People gradually realize that not every piece of information on Facebook is official or trustworthy. There are lots of people and organizations who share information on social media to seek likes and shares and try to get others' trust. Vietnam now has a law prohibiting the sharing of misleading information on social media, but people still can't trust these channels completely... To find trustworthy information, people tend to go to traditional media and television. – Participant 1O, an agency practitioner with five years of experience.

In contrast, participants who disagreed with the finding from phase 1 mentioned they would still use social media in crisis communication because social media channels are where conversations about crises take place:

I still prefer using social media to spread information in a crisis because every speech and discussion is led by social media. Therefore, I will focus every direction to social media. It is effective in linking different communication channels. Also, if I book an advertorial on traditional media, the news outlet will also put the article's link on their fan page. There will be readers coming to read about and discuss the issue on social media. I believe that where discussions occur, information will spread. – Participant 1N, an in-house practitioner with seven years of experience.

Participants were asked about their opinions on the finding that Vietnamese stakeholders do not trust crisis information on social media. The opinions were mixed, with some participants agreeing, some disagreeing, and some saying that it would depend on the crisis.

Those who agreed that stakeholders do not trust crisis information on social media thought that social media might be channels for stakeholders to locate crisis information or a crisis response, but that stakeholders always check an additional source such as friends or traditional media to verify the information:

I think the finding is true. When the stakeholders read information about a crisis on social media, they just read to know about it, not to believe it. To verify it, they go to other tools such as the Internet, mainstream newspapers or acquaintances, but they do not verify it through social media. – Participant 1T, an agency practitioner with eight years of experience.

Additionally, one participant shared that the reason stakeholders do not trust information shared by organizations on social media may be the commercialized and promotional content on organizations' fan pages:

Almost all information on brands' fan pages in Vietnam is commercialized. We do not have any trustworthy portal for customers to seek information. For example, a social influencer can be paid to give a good review for a product... Therefore, any information, including crisis information that comes from those fan pages will not gain the trust of the public. Using social media to solve a crisis is still not effective in Vietnam, so the people in the communication industry have other traditional communication channels to back them up, especially newspapers or TV, to send out positive responses. – Participant 1O, an agency practitioner with five years of experience.

Participants who thought that stakeholders believe that crisis information on social media is trustworthy mentioned that social media channels always have some influence on an audience and can shape an audience's perception to an extent:

Generally, the information flow on social media has a certain influence on stakeholders. When they seek information about a certain crisis, if they are superficial people, they will tend to believe the negative information. However, objective stakeholders will look at both the negative and positive sides of a crisis. They will read carefully to see if that information is credible enough and then they will decide. – Participant 1S, an in-house practitioner with ten years of experience.

As stated, some participants said that whether stakeholders trust crisis information on social media depends on the crisis. However, two participants said that even if a stakeholder does not trust crisis information on social media, he or she may share it:

I think whether the stakeholders trust crisis information on social media depends on the situation. Stakeholders may not believe the information, but they may still share with others

on social media. That information is accidentally spread even further. And the person who receives the information from those on Facebook will go online to learn more and spread the information even further. Or they do not know what an issue truly is, but they still gossip about it. – Participant 1P, an agency practitioner with eight years of experience.

From my experience, stakeholders usually believe information about a crisis that is shared on social media. Even if they do not believe in bad news, they will share it anyway. Once the negative information appears on social media, stakeholders will spread it very fast. They don't spread positive information as fast. – Participant 1V, an in-house practitioner with eight years of experience.

In summary, participants of interview (1c) established that while stakeholders may not always trust crisis information that is shared on social media, social media channels should still be watched and used, as stakeholders tend to share and spread crisis information further. Participants gave several reasons why they would continue to use social media for crisis communication regardless of these channels being perceived as less credible. Firstly, social media channels were thought to lead discussions so if an organization posted positive news about itself, the news would get passed to different channels. Also, traditional media channels will post an organization's news (e.g. advertorials) on their fan pages, too, so a positive message will appear on both traditional and social media. Also, even if social media news is not fully credible, these channels provide a place for stakeholders to begin learning about a crisis. Stakeholders can then seek out other sources for confirming a crisis and gaining additional information. As such, social media, even if not fully credible, always has some influence.

8.5. Vietnamese Organizations Consider Target Stakeholders' Age Groups When Communicating During a Crisis

One finding of phase 1 was that if an older stakeholder (aged 35 and above) knows about social media, he or she would think more highly of these channels and organizations that use them than would younger stakeholders. In interview (1c), the researcher asked if Vietnamese organizations consider target stakeholders' age groups when communicating during a crisis and if this finding would make the participants plan to use traditional media and social media in crisis communication any differently.

Participants agreed that the stakeholders' age is an important consideration when planning for crisis communication. However, the participants had different opinions on the finding, with some thinking it was true and others thinking otherwise:

Of course, the age group of stakeholders influences the choice of media for crisis management... Our organization must prioritize to solve a risk if it affects our target

audience or those who have a great influence. In terms of age, personality and customer segmentation, if a risk happens to our target audience, we prioritize solving it. I think the findings are reasonable even though 35-year-olds use Facebook less than younger people. However, older people care more about things happening around them and are more easily scared. Thus, social media information has a bigger impact on them. Meanwhile, younger people are forgetful, and for them, social media information can come and go. – Participant 1V, an in-house practitioner with eight years of experience.

I disagree with the finding. For younger stakeholders, they rarely read traditional media. Thus, we have to focus on social media to communicate with them. For older stakeholders, most of them still use traditional media and most are not too tech-savvy. I think the participants in phase 1 of your study were confused and may have thought of a fan page, Cong An Nhan Dan for example, as social media. In fact, this kind of fan page only shares links from traditional media. – Participant 1N, an in-house practitioner with seven years of experience.

However, regardless of their agreement or disagreement with the finding, all participants mentioned that their organizations would not change their crisis communication plans because of it:

While I agree with the finding, I think the older stakeholders trust social media but still favor traditional media... On the other hand, the younger stakeholders receive a lot of information from many sources, so they are more careful, and doubtful, with most information, not only information on social media. Therefore, this finding would not change my or my organization's decision on whether to use social media in crisis communication. – Participant 1Q, an agency practitioner with five years of experience.

The older stakeholders may trust social media more or less than the younger ones, but they still trust traditional media. And we don't want to deal with a crisis on social media. We use traditional media to send responses or updates to a crisis. It's official and effective. –

Participant 1R, an agency practitioner with ten years of experience.

In brief, the interview results show that Vietnamese organizations consider target stakeholders' age groups when communicating during a crisis. However, the comparison of older and younger stakeholders' trust in crisis information on social media does not contribute to their organizations' crisis communication plans.

8.6. Most Vietnamese Organizations Do Not Want to Engage in Dialogue with Stakeholders on Social Media

In interview (1c), participants were asked if their organizations think it is important to engage in dialogue with stakeholders during crises, and if such dialogue should occur on social

media. Two participants mentioned that while dialogue is important, their organizations do not want to engage in it during crises, either offline or on social media:

Having a dialogue with stakeholders in crisis is theoretically important, but in fact, no one actually listens to the dialogue... For example, when a customer buys a dairy product and the product is damaged, they refuse to directly report the problem to us. In addition, they demand a higher refund. And this is a very common problem because they are using personal information to put pressure on the business. They do not want to go back to a conventional dialogue but want to escalate the issue to another level. People usually want to receive more in return than what they suffered. – Participant 1V, an in-house practitioner with eight years of experience.

Having dialogue is a chance for media to pick up the story and spin it in a way we don't want. Therefore, we choose not to engage in any dialogue during a crisis. – Participant 1T, an agency practitioner with eight years of experience.

On the other hand, three participants said that their organizations might engage in a dialogue with stakeholders during a crisis, but the conversation should be offline, not on social media:

Engaging in dialogue is extremely important. However, engaging with the stakeholders on social media will expose ourselves, both our strengths and flaws, to the public. The information is not kept among the involved parties anymore. The government may interfere. The traditional media can jump to find new angles of the story and report it in an unwanted way. Therefore, if a piece of crisis information is intended for the public, we can put it on social media. If not, we prefer to take the conversation offline. – Participant 1U, an agency practitioner with 20 years of experience.

To summarize, from the interview results, while some Vietnamese organizations will engage in a dialogue with stakeholders during a crisis, most of them do not want to do it on social media. Some organizations prefer not to engage with stakeholders at all on any media because organizations perceive that they want too much in return for their suffering. Also, some organizations do not want traditional media to pick up a social media story and “spin” it. Those that will engage in dialogue prefer to do so offline because online discussions could lead to too much exposure of the government could begin to interfere.

8.7. Most Vietnamese Organizations Do Not Want to Deliver a Sincere Crisis Response

In response to phase 1's finding that Vietnamese organizations underappreciate the value of sincerity and accommodative content (including corrective action, and mortification or apology), the researcher asked the participants if they agreed with this finding and if their organizations would consider a sincere crisis response. The participants agreed that Vietnamese organizations want to

avoid admitting responsibility for a crisis. Therefore, accommodative content is their least preferred crisis response strategy. Among the participants, six named some organizations that had good crisis response practice by accepting responsibility and seeking corrective actions. However, all the examples were foreign companies working in Vietnam (i.e., Samsung, Toyota, Yamaha) that had safety or customer service crises. No Vietnamese-started companies were mentioned:

Some companies apologize with practical actions. For example, in the Yamaha crisis, Yamaha told all consumers who bought its motorbikes to go to the dealers and have the defective parts replaced free of charge... After this, there was no more complaint or mention of this crisis. Another example is the crisis of Samsung Galaxy Note7. When all flights prohibited using Note7, Samsung had to recall all the phones from consumers and repay the same amount of money for consumers. Samsung also gave people more benefits when using Samsung. No one continued protesting Samsung. If a company apologizes and acts sincerely, no one would go against it anymore. – Participant 1Q, an agency practitioner with five years of experience.

Participant 1M, an agency practitioner with four years of experience, explained that the nature of traditional media in Vietnam makes organizations think they do not have to produce a sincere apology:

The corrective actions, mortification and apology, are only for showing to the public. Traditional media is easily influenced and affected by money. Traditional media may cover a crisis for a short period of time until people turn to other news, or it can be paid to twist a crisis in a way that benefits an organization. In foreign countries, journalists wait for the news and go straight to the source to get information, but in Vietnam, the journalists are paid to get the news or paid to write news in certain angles. Hence, the Vietnamese public is always skeptical about information. In this age of social media emergence, organizations still have this responsibility avoidance habit because they believe they can cover up a crisis.

To summarize, all participants agreed that most Vietnamese organizations do not want to deliver a sincere crisis response, with a few exceptions of foreign organizations operating in Vietnam. These few foreign organizations, however, provide models of how crisis communication could be handled on social media and demonstrate two-way communication with stakeholders. They use accommodative strategies of accepting responsibility and delivering corrective action.

8.8. Vietnamese Public Relations Practitioners Do Not Think that the Choice of Communication Channel Matters More than the Response Message

Participants were asked about their thoughts on a study by Schultz et al. (2011) that compared the influences of media type on crisis communication and how people responded to the

same messages distributed on different media channels. According to this study, the choice of medium, or the channels through which an organization chooses to communicate during crises influences how stakeholders respond to the messages.

Only one participant thought that the channel choice matters more than the message, expressing that social media could be used to temper the flames of a crisis before an official statement can be issued:

For me, the selection of communication channels is more important than the crisis response message... Before building up any messages for responding, we need to think and plan carefully which communication channels are suitable and effective during a crisis time. For example, Facebook can be used to quickly respond by providing a simple statement such as, "We are assessing the customers' complaints and feedback. We will have official documents and responses for this type of concern soon." We do not tell the public what is right and what is wrong at this stage. We just show the public that we are listening and caring for the customers, and that we will handle the problem and release the official statement. –

Participant 1O, an agency practitioner with five years of experience.

Other participants disagreed, stating that the message is the core of crisis communication, and the channel is only a supporting tool:

The construction of a message to handle a crisis is much more important than the choice of communication channel. Firstly, you can choose the media channel but if you do not have a clear message, no matter which channel you choose, it will be meaningless. You have to build a unified, clear and correct message. For example, when Samsung was handling its crisis, the message was clear and consistent, but Khai Silk was a different story. Information was inconsistent from the beginning. Choosing crisis handling content is more important than finding communication channels. – Participant 1T, an agency practitioner with eight years of experience.

I think building the message to respond in a crisis is always the most important. It takes a lot of time and resources to think about what message should be transmitted. If you focus on your channel and your message is wrong, the plan will fail. Both are important, but the message is much more important. – Participant 1S, an in-house practitioner with ten years of experience.

To summarize, most Vietnamese public relations practitioners interviewed do not think that the choice of communication channel matters more than the response message. Instead, a carefully crafted crisis response is valued more in crisis communication.

8.9. Vietnamese Public Relations Practitioners Believe that Public Relations in Vietnam is Mostly About Promotion, but Public Relations is Gradually Changing

The researcher aimed to explore in more detail a finding from phase 1 that the focus of public relations in Vietnam is more aligned with promotional and marketing goals rather than building and managing reputation. Participants agreed with this finding:

Public relations in Vietnam targets mainly consumers. Organizations always ask if a piece of news or an article is good for branding and promotion, if it displays the product brand clearly enough, and if it could increase brand awareness or sales. Nowadays, readers are smarter and often ignore articles that are too promotional. These articles are not trusted anymore. – Participant 1Q, an agency practitioner with five years of experience.

All these participants also added that this promotional objective of public relations also promotes the “paid” nature of public relations and media in Vietnam. As a result, crisis communication effort is easier and somewhat less trustworthy to stakeholders.

In other countries, there is no public relations concept to pay money in exchange for positive coverage. For example, our partner in Taiwan was surprised and did not understand why we gave information to the newspapers in Vietnam but still had to pay... In other countries, the issues that are supported by the press are usually free of charge, while in Vietnam, everything is paid for. However, the good side is that everything monetized is actually easy to manage. When crises occur, organizations can impact the press to deliver more positive news. However, stakeholders have understood this practice and placed less trust in news that supports organizations during crises. – Participant 1S, an in-house practitioner with ten years of experience.

Three participants expressed that public relations in Vietnam is changing for the better. Organizations now pay more attention to reputation management and crisis communication:

When a crisis happens, organizations try to justify themselves, but the most important thing is to maintain their reputation. Organizations now understand the importance of reputation management and crisis communication. They’ve learned that when handling a crisis, reputation matters as much as a product. They’ve trained the spokesperson to speak on the position of the company, to protect its reputation, not using a brand manager to speak for the product anymore. – Participant 1R, an agency practitioner with ten years of experience.

In general, from interview (1c) results, Vietnamese public relations practitioners believe that public relations in Vietnam consists mostly of promotion but that it is gradually changing to include reputation management and crisis communication.

8.10. Phase 3 Summary

In summary, the phase 3 interviews provided an opportunity to ask practitioners about apparently contradictory results between practitioner and stakeholder perceptions of crisis communication on social media from phases 1 and 2 and to explore some issues more deeply. As in phase 1, results showed that an advantage of social media for crisis communication is that these channels can be used in all three phases of a crisis. Social media channels offer the advantages of greater transparency in stakeholder communication, a wider and faster reach for sending positive messages and information about corrective actions, and the possibility of checking stakeholder reactions to messages. However, all participants said that social media is complex to use for crisis response. There are too many channels and flows of information and conversations can be very negative and therefore difficult to manage. These disadvantages mean that more and very well-trained staff would be needed for crisis communication on social media.

Next, no agreement was found among participants regarding whether and how to use social media for crisis response. Those who had no or little experience in managing crises expressed more willingness to use these channels for the purpose than those with greater experience. Those who did use social media for crisis response had different strategies for using the channels.

Next, even though stakeholders said that they did not trust crisis information on social media, most practitioners said they would continue using social media for this purpose because social media still carried influence and conversations often began on these channels. Stakeholders use these channels to find information that they can double check elsewhere.

Also, even though the phase 2 survey results indicated that older participants generally trust and want crisis information on social media, practitioners said that they would not change their crisis management plans because the plans already accounted for different age groups. Practitioners also agreed that organizations prefer not to engage in dialogue with stakeholders at all and do not want to deliver sincere responses. Any dialogue would take place offline. Further, it is only foreign companies operating in Vietnam that use accommodative strategies. Lastly, practitioners think that the choice of channel for crisis communication is second in importance to the message for an effective crisis response.

Chapter 9: Discussion

Now that all three phases of the study are complete, this chapter discusses the findings altogether using the theories and literature. This discussion considers the focus of public relations in Vietnam, how social media channels are being adopted for crisis communication, older stakeholders' appreciation of social media for crisis communication, implications for Diffusion of Innovations (DOI), implications for Hofstede's power distance and uncertainty avoidance, and implications for Networked Crisis Communication Theory (NCCT).

9.1. The Focus of Public Relations in Vietnam

As found from this study, Vietnam is in the early stages of maturity in public relations as the practice is still new in the country. Public relations only began after the introduction of the Doi Moi economic reforms of 1986. It is now only 33 years since that time. As noted early in this research, the practice of public relations still lacks regulations.

Currently, most organizations and practitioners focus on product marketing and media relations and pay little attention to stakeholder management and reputation management (Van, 2013; Doan & Bilowol, 2014). However, the practice may be changing. As Vietnamese organizations are devoting more time and effort to reputation management in front of the media and public stakeholders (Vietnam Report, 2015), the focus may be shifting.

As found in interview (1c), most participants agreed with the above observations when they said that public relations in Vietnam is primarily promotional and sales focused. However, three participants said that public relations in Vietnam is improving. They said that organizations now pay more attention to reputation management and crisis communication.

As found through all the interviews, most organizations still prefer to deny or hide their crises, which indicates that these organizations are still acting within the model of public relations that Grunig and Hunt (1984) described as press agency or publicity. To review, Grunig and Hunt described four models of public relations practice, which are (1) press agency or publicity, (2) public information, (3) two-way asymmetrical, and (4) two-way symmetrical. Under the first model, practitioners aim to persuade or manipulate their stakeholders according to the desires of the organization. Practitioners aim to emphasize an organization's positive features and minimize any that are negative.

As found in this current study, the statements of many interview participants indicated that organizations commonly use social media channels following the model of press agency, which is also how they use traditional media. According to the interviews, many organizations try to hide crises and manipulate stakeholders. Rather than delivering a sincere and caring response when a social media crisis begins, many organizations try to delete negative comments or at least remove

their organizations' names from the comments. Also, some stakeholder participants said that organizations use social media to beg the crisis questions or question the credibility of whistleblowers. As noted by practitioners in the interviews, some organizations try to manipulate stakeholders by paying social media influencers to seed positive or more neutral comments about the organizations. Organizations also pay for positive coverage of themselves on traditional media. In a Vietnamese context, these payments may be thought of as gifts that practitioners and organizations give to cultivate positive interpersonal relationships with journalists who work for top-tier publications. These gifts guarantee journalists' attendance at organizations' press conferences and the publishing of organizations' stories in traditional media that many stakeholders find credible. Therefore, the public relations model followed by most Vietnamese organizations and the media does not follow the same expectations of open and truthful reporting that is found in the West. Although many practitioners want their organizations to respond to stakeholders since crisis management impacts on organizational reputation and long-term marketing objectives, many organizations persist in their strategy to deny crises and remain with the press agency model.

Several reasons explain why many Vietnamese organizations follow the press agency model in which they work to control what the media says about them. The need for control follows Vietnamese organizational norms of avoiding uncertainty or taking no risks and playing it safe when managing a crisis. Although Vietnam as a country has a relatively low score on the Hofstede cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance (30 out of 100), the goal of avoiding uncertainty or removing risk from any crisis communication was noticed throughout the interviews. Practitioner participants repeatedly expressed the need to carefully plan for a crisis and to control communication about a crisis. The main reason that practitioners gave for not using social media in crisis communication was their lack of control over crisis messages. A common sentiment on the use of social media for crisis response was to use these channels only to temporarily ease a situation by saying that the organization was investigating it. This response gave an organization time to plan an official response for delivery on traditional media. Part of this planning would certainly include getting journalists and the media on side to report a story in an organization's favor.

Vietnamese organizations also want to keep control over their crisis communication because they typically do not want to draw government attention to their crises. This issue was discussed by a participant in interview (1c). As mentioned at the start of this dissertation, traditional media in Vietnam is fully owned by the government and any story printed in the media is a message to the government. Organizations therefore want to control what the government hears. However, as some stakeholder participants noted, it is difficult to hide crises from the government in this age of social media.

The practice of public relations as press agency in Vietnam is also reflected in the country's high power-distance score (70 out of 100). Organizations would perceive themselves as having a higher position in society than their customers and would therefore not think that they need to respond to them. However, as social media gives everyday people a voice, people may be feeling more powerful and expect organizations to respond. Indeed, as found in the interviews and survey with stakeholders, people do expect organizations to respond to crises and particularly through the delivery of sincere apologies and by taking corrective action.

However, as also found in this study, some organizations have moved along into the other three models of public relations that Grunig and Hunt (1984) described. Pressure for an organization to change its public relations model may be coming from at least the following four sources: (1) practitioners' overseas training in public relations in which they learn about the importance of stakeholder relations, organizational reputation and crisis management; (2) social media channels in which organizations now face networks of disgruntled stakeholders that have the potential to make crises widely known and keep them alive; (3) noticing that a poor crisis response has led to sales problems as in the case of THP, and (4) foreign companies operating in the country that bring with them other public relations practices.

Although some Vietnamese organizations may have moved from Grunig and Hunt's (1984) first model of press agency to the second model of public information or truthfulness in reporting, it may be difficult to establish whether a particular organization has moved to the second model since all traditional media in Vietnam is considered biased. This bias means that it is difficult to know whether any story is true. Under Grunig and Hunt's second model, practitioners still disseminate positive information, but the information tends to be truthful and factual, and organizations are not aiming to manipulate. From the interviews in this study, there is evidence that at least some organizations deliver truth in reporting since participants discussed how they have quickly solved smaller stakeholder issues directly on social media. Indeed, there is also evidence that at least some Vietnamese organizations have moved along to the third and fourth models of public relations practice since some practitioners said that they are using social media to research what their stakeholders are discussing, and for small crises, some practitioners have even replied to stakeholders directly on social media.

Under Grunig and Hunt's (1984) third model of public relations, two-way asymmetrical, practitioners research stakeholder attitudes to determine how best to communicate with them but do not try to change how their organization is acting. From the study, there is some evidence that at least some practitioners are listening to stakeholders on social media both to find crises and to determine how best to communicate with them. Under Grunig and Hunt's fourth model of public

relations, two-way symmetrical, practitioners research and communicate with stakeholders to better understand them, solve their problems and build trust. When an organization follows this model, it learns from its stakeholders and changes its behavior instead of trying to manipulate and control (Grunig, 2006). According to Wakefield (2008), however, the fourth model represents more of an ideal since stakeholders may have too many viewpoints for an organization to consider. Thus, a mixed approach of following the third and fourth models together provides a more realistic description of what happens in effective public relations. As found in this study, some practitioners have used social media to listen and respond to their stakeholders' issues, but most who have tried social media for responding have found it too complex. It is the large international organizations such as Toyota and Samsung that have used social media more fully for response in customer service and safety crises, but even these organizations take personal communication with individual stakeholders offline.

9.2. How Social Media Channels Are Being Adopted for Crisis Communication

RQ1 asked how organizations and public relations practitioners in Vietnam perceive the usefulness of social media channels to communicate with stakeholders during crises. To examine this question, the researcher reviewed literature and applied three aspects of Rogers' DOI, which were: (1) the advantages of using social media compared to traditional media for communicating crises, (2) the compatibility of using social media with current norms and values of Vietnamese public relations practitioners and organizations to communicate crises, and (3) the paths by which organizations adopt social media for communicating crises.

According to much of the literature (e.g. Sherman, 2010; Coombs, 2014), a key advantage of using social media for crisis communication is that, unlike traditional media, social media channels can be used during all three stages of such communication, which are pre-crisis, crisis response, and post-crisis. As social media may be used during all three stages, these channels offer organizations more opportunities to protect the safety and well-being of their stakeholders as well as their reputation.

During pre-crisis, organizations can use social media to monitor for crises, and during crisis response, organizations can use the channels for communicating directly with stakeholders. If necessary, organizations can adjust their messages during crisis response to better meet stakeholder needs. Finally, during post-crisis, organizations can use social media to follow-up on stakeholder communication to help evaluate the entire communication effort and adjust plans for communicating crises in future. Social media clearly offer advantages during pre-crisis and post-crisis, but the literature reviewed, and the interviews and survey conducted for this study indicate that social media have both advantages and limitations for crisis response.

Regarding pre-crisis, many interview participants agreed that social media channels are useful for identifying issues in real time so that practitioners can respond proactively to potential threats. As mentioned earlier, some interview participants said that they use social media to quickly answer stakeholder questions. According to Coombs (2014), proactive responses help to minimize the spread of negative news and protect an organization's reputation. However, as also noted by Coombs (2014), many organizations find social media monitoring to be challenging because the sheer amount of online data is often too large to effectively manage, integrate and interpret. Participants in interview (1c) said these things, too, that using social media for crisis communication is too complex, that there are too many channels and too many flows of information. Nonetheless, these channels offer organizations opportunities for responding earlier to stakeholder issues, which is an advantage over using traditional media alone. Also, during pre-crisis, organizations may use social media to develop positive relationships with stakeholders that may serve these organizations well in the event of a crisis. Organizations may use this time to tell stakeholders about their missions and values and generate favorable coverage of themselves. Using social media during pre-crisis, however, is not fully compatible with the norms and values of Vietnamese public relations practice. As discussed, while key aims of Western public relations are to maintain organizational reputation and establish positive stakeholder relations, these aims are not typically part of Vietnamese public relations practice. Therefore, practitioners are less likely to perceive a need to monitor social media channels for crises. Nonetheless, some practitioners in this research said that they do monitor social media for crises and respond to stakeholders immediately to halt a crisis from forming. However, rather than on social media, organizations mostly respond 'offline' to such developing crises as they do not want to generate more negative comments or give information to the press. Organizations in many other countries also do not respond fully to individual comments online because crisis response often requires dialogue, and as noted by some researchers (Kent, 2010; Kent & Taylor, 2018), these channels as currently designed are not capable of supporting dialogue. A tool more like Skype would be more appropriate.

Regarding crisis response, the literature and PR-practitioner interviews and survey evaluated the speed, reach, interactivity, and transparency of social media channels as being both the primary advantages and limitations of these channels compared to traditional media. Although Schultz et al. (2012) consider social media to be the "first public relations medium" because of the interactivity of these channels and consequent possibility for greater symmetrical communication between organizations and stakeholders, others (e.g. Kent & Taylor, 2018) perceive social media differently because *as mentioned above*, these channels do not allow for true dialogue. To review, Lane (2018) defined dialogue "is a special form of two-way communication characterized by participants'

mutual positive orientation toward each other, and the communication in which they engage” (p. 657). Whether Vietnamese organizations perceive the speed, reach, interactivity, and transparency of social media as helpful or limiting appears to depend upon the goals that an organization sets for managing a crisis, which is the first step of crisis communication (Ulmer et al., 2015). Also, in most instances in Vietnam at this time, if social media channels were to be selected for crisis response, they would be used in addition to traditional media because not all stakeholders have access to social media, and, among those that do, most perceive traditional media to be more credible even though such channels are owned by the government. Even if the goals of a crisis were to align with the use of social media, however, some practitioners expressed that the organizations for which they work would still not use these channels because they thought that their public relations or marketing teams lacked knowledge for using social media effectively for crisis response. According to DOI, this reason is enough to reject an innovation. As stated earlier, “when an adequate level of how-to knowledge is not obtained prior to the trial and adoption of an innovation, rejection and discontinuance are likely to results (Rogers, 2003, p. 173). Indeed, as interview (1c) revealed, many of the practitioners who had tried social media for crisis communication discontinued using these channels for this purpose as the practitioners lacked sufficient experience to ascertain the effects of using social media for crises, and therefore found themselves dealing with challenges that were difficult to overcome.

If an organization set the goals of reaching as many stakeholders as possible as quickly as possible, being truthful or transparent, receiving a positive reaction from stakeholders, preventing the start of rumors, signaling willingness to communicate with stakeholders, and wanting to give information to the press, then the organization could use social media as additional channels to quickly send out a message of corrective action and mortification or apology, and to provide a communication link to the organization. To be credible, the message must be consistent with any message given on traditional media so that stakeholders do not perceive the social media message as false. As some participants mentioned, social media are effective channels for crisis response if audiences will welcome the response, which means that an organization is transparent, apologizes, and explains how it is fixing the problem. Some interview participants also expressed that stakeholders had greater expectations for social media to be used for crisis response when a crisis begins on these channels. When a response is sent on social media, stakeholders could share the message with their networks, which would maximize the reach of the channels. As discussed in the literature, a quick and sincere response offers the possibility of protecting both stakeholders and the organization, and stakeholders appreciate both speed and sincerity. In the case of a crisis for which an organization is perceived to be responsible, Coombs (1998) suggested that the most effective

messages use the strategies of corrective action and mortification or apology. Therefore, for internal crises, messages that use these strategies would be the most appropriate to send through an organization's pages on social media. If stakeholders were to post negative comments on an organization's response, the organization could still be polite and perhaps thank stakeholders for their comments. The organization could also give each stakeholder a contact for assistance and point stakeholders towards a website of crisis information. An organization would have prepared this website prior to a crisis occurring and kept it dark until it was needed. When activated, the site could help contain the crisis to one main source of online information that is provided directly from the organization and would not be subject to the editing processes of traditional media. Journalists from traditional media could refer to this website, too. Any dialogue with stakeholders would take place offline and not through social media as these channels are not yet suitable for effectively managing dialogue (Kent & Taylor, 2018). In Vietnam, public relations practitioners have been able to observe the above use of social media for crisis communication from multinational organizations such as Yamaha and Samsung, and, if they have not yet used social media for crisis communication, can consider whether it would work for them.

Finally, the use of social media channels during post-crisis is similar to their use during pre-crisis as in both these stages, organizations may use social media to monitor stakeholder sentiment. However, during post-crisis, organizations are looking for indicators of how they handled a crisis versus the potential for a crisis beginning. In post-crisis, organizations may look at stakeholder remarks to determine what stakeholders think of them after the crisis and consider how they might manage a future crisis. As mentioned by one participant in this study, social media may also be used in post-crisis to convey positive information about an organization to help rebuild trust.

When social media channels are selected for crisis response in Vietnam, this research found that their use is in many instances suggested to a manager by a team of public relations practitioners or marketing people. The team typically provides a rationale for using the channels, explaining their strengths and weaknesses and what the team members believe they can control on social media. If the team works in an agency, the manager will take the proposal to their client, who may take it up even as far as the company's board of directors for approval. The selection of social media for crisis response, therefore, takes a bottom-up approach, with a senior manager making the final decision. The decision process followed does not match any of the three processes described by Rogers (2003), which are individual, optional, and authority. In Vietnam, a team evaluation leads to approval at gradually higher levels until a final decision is made. According to the survey for this study, in most Vietnamese organizations, crisis channels are selected on a case-by-case basis, but that in selecting these channels, organizations have preferences. Therefore, social media channels

may be evaluated for use in many organizations' crisis communication plans. Of all social media channels used in the country and among organizations, Facebook was found to be the most popular

9.2. Older Stakeholders Appreciate a Crisis Response on Social Media

RQ2 asked whether Vietnamese stakeholders expect an organization's crisis response to appear on social media channels, and if so, what should this response be like. Answers regarding this question in the interview and survey with stakeholders were evaluated using NCCT (Schultz et al., 2011, 2012; Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013) and the reviewed literature. The findings from this current study lend some support to NCCT, which is that different people act differently towards messages delivered on different channels depending upon people's past experiences with the channels and interpretations of them. Survey (2b) with stakeholders in this study found that compared to younger stakeholders, older Vietnamese stakeholders (age 35 and above) appreciate receiving a crisis response on social media channels. If an organization were to deliver a crisis response on social media, older Vietnamese stakeholders said that they would perceive the organization to be more caring and willing to engage in dialogue and that they would be more likely to stop sharing bad news about the organization and support it. These were some of the findings of NCCT along with one other, which was that stakeholders receiving a crisis message on social media would perceive an organization as being more sincere. In this current study, neither older nor younger stakeholders thought that an organization would be more sincere if it used social media for its crisis response. This aspect of NCCT therefore did not hold up in the current study.

Schultz et al.'s (2011) first study of NCCT tested whether sending a crisis message via a type of social media (Twitter or Twitter+blog) versus a newspaper article resulted in different stakeholder responses regarding organizational reputation, willingness to share a crisis message with a friend, and willingness to engage in secondary crisis behavior such as boycotting or spreading negative news about an organization. The three messages tested in the different media conditions were an apology to victims, sympathy, and information about the crisis. The results showed that crisis communication on a Twitter message linked to a blog (Twitter+blog) led to higher post-crisis reputation probably because stakeholders were better able to comprehend a message after having been exposed to it more than once; that participants were most likely to share newspaper stories, probably because newspapers have greater credibility than social media channels; and that communication on Twitter or Twitter+blog led to less intense crisis reactions. Also, those participants who received information about the crisis expressed that they were less likely to say bad things or boycott an organization than those who received an apology or sympathy. This last finding indicates that stakeholders want a detailed explanation about why a crisis occurred and what happened. By giving a detailed explanation, an organization shows transparency.

In a follow-up study by Utz, et al. (2013) that compared messages in which an organization took responsibility for a crisis (intentional crisis) versus presenting itself as a victim of a natural disaster (victim crisis), stakeholders perceived the reputation of an organization as better when the message was received through social media (Twitter or Facebook), but were more willing to share the message when it was received through a newspaper. Like the study by Schultz et al. (2011), those participants who received the message through social media versus a newspaper expressed that they were less likely to say bad things or boycott the organization. In the Utz, et al. (2013) study, the researchers also looked at the emotional content of participant responses and found that people were angrier when they received an intentional crisis message. The researchers concluded that the use of social media in crisis communication is “now seen as a cue for the willingness of an organization to quickly inform its stakeholders and to engage in dialog with them” (p. 45). They also concluded that social media should be made part of crisis communication plans and that crisis information that is shared through social media should be consistent with information presented through traditional channels. Also, organizations should attend to stakeholder emotions, particularly anger, as it pushes people towards more negative reaction towards an organization as in the case of THP.

Firstly, considering the THP case using NCCT and the findings of this study, some participants thought that the company should have used social media channels to respond while others disagreed. According to NCCT, a response on social media could have helped THP maintain a higher reputation if the message did the following: explained what happened, calmed stakeholder anger, explained what actions the company was taking to fix the situation, and offered an apology. The message should also have been sent quickly. In interviews with stakeholders for this study, those who thought that social media would have helped in the THP case offered support for conclusions drawn from NCCT. One participant said, “We wanted an apology and goodwill,” while another said, “a persuasive explanation on social media ... would have reduced negative judgments” about the company. In addition to being sent through social media, the message should have been sent through traditional media as Vietnamese stakeholders largely consider traditional media to be more credible.

Next, although participants in the NCCT study expressed that they would be less likely to engage in secondary crisis reactions if a company responded on social media, the stakeholder survey in this study gave a somewhat different result. Altogether, only 35.1% of survey respondents at least agreed that they would not engage in secondary crisis reactions if a company responded on social media. However, when considering different age groups, 51.3% of older respondents (aged 35 or above) said that they would not engage in secondary crisis reactions if a company responded

on social media. Therefore, at least for most older adults, the survey results agree in part with NCCT, that people would be less likely to engage in secondary crisis reactions if an organization responded on social media. In the survey, the older respondents were also the only age group of which most members (54.7%) thought that social media channels were credible for delivering a crisis response. These results lend support to using social media for crisis communication at least as a secondary channel and particularly for older stakeholders.

Considering the results of the interview and survey conducted for RQ2 together, stakeholders appreciate a quick response, but value an official, well-considered response more. Also, most stakeholders said that if a crisis started on social media, they would expect a response on social media. Survey respondents also at least agreed (62.5%) that if an organization responded on social media, they would perceive it to be caring. Further, 68.1% at least agreed that the organization would be willing to have a dialogue.

Social media give Vietnamese people a means for having their voices heard, channels for communicating among themselves and with organizations about how they have been affected by certain actions, what they think about matters of concern, and how they would prefer to be treated. In cases of physical and psychological harm created by organizational behavior, social media can allow stakeholders to warn others about what is happening and bring the poor behaviors to the attention of the organizations and the government so that the behaviors can be corrected. Clearly the government should not want its citizens hurt by events such as illegal waste discharges and consumption of damaging foods. As discussed, some organizations in the country have been fined and shut down after their behaviors were disclosed on social media. Even if it is sometimes difficult for social media users to find truth among the many posted messages, if enough negative comments emerge about an organization over an extended time, that organization probably has a problem that it needs to address, and its problem will likely reach traditional media for greater exposure. As one stakeholder said, “Truth is hard to hide, especially in this digital age”. It seems important that organizations should pay attention to communication about them on social media.

9.3. Implications for Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI).

This study provides support for Rogers’ (2003) DOI in its application to the adoption of social media for crisis communication in Vietnam. To review, DOI is a theory proposed by Rogers to explain how an innovation is communicated through different channels over time within a social system before being adopted. The introduction of an innovation creates uncertainty among members of the social system and triggers their evaluation, adoption or rejection of it. If the innovation is adopted, the social system will change in its structure and function (Rogers, 2003). Antecedent conditions to starting the adoption process are previous practice with the innovation, felt needs or

problems with which the innovation could help, a culture or personal attitude that is positive towards innovation, and norms of the social system that allow for the adoption of the innovation. The innovation-diffusion process is a sequence of events through which an individual, organization, or decision unit goes from first acknowledging an innovation to a decision to adopt or reject it to confirmation of the decision (Rogers, 2003). The sequence includes five stages: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation. In the persuasion stage, to evaluate an innovation for adoption, Rogers listed five interrelated attributes of the innovation, which are perceived relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability.

The results of this present study show that social media for crisis communication has not been fully adopted by most Vietnamese organizations for several reasons that can be explained using DOI. Firstly, Vietnamese organizations would have different antecedent conditions for adopting social media. For some, the problem of negative online stakeholder comments would have prompted the organizations to consider investigating whether they could answer stakeholders on social media. Other organizations, however, do not appear to understand the value of crisis response for managing organizational reputation and maintaining stakeholder trust, and would therefore not even consider using social media for answering customers. Instead, such organizations would tend to follow press agency as previously described. Still, as found in this study, some organizations have been more innovative and currently use social media for this purpose but particularly for managing smaller crises in which a customer's issue can quickly and easily be solved through social media channels.

This study also tested three stages of the adoption process, which were knowledge, persuasion, and decision. Regarding knowledge of social media for crisis communication, many organizations would know about this innovation through their public relations employees who have overseas training in crisis communication and through observing international organizations successfully using social media for this purpose. In addition, most organizations also already use social media channels for marketing so already have some knowledge of how these channels work. Many organizations do not, however, have knowledge of the benefits of monitoring for potential crises.

It is in the persuasion stage that adoption of these channels for crisis communication faces greater challenges. According to interview (1c), many Vietnamese organizations have not adopted these channels for crisis communication because of their perceived complexity for crisis monitoring and crisis response, the lack of credibility of these channels among most Vietnamese stakeholders, and the incompatibility of these channels with many organizations' need to tightly control their crisis response. Nonetheless, social media channels were found to have the following relative

advantages over traditional media for crisis communication: greater transparency, a wider and faster reach, and the ability to check how stakeholders are reacting to crisis messages and adjust if necessary (interview (1c)). Some organizations use social media for crisis communication alongside traditional media by posting press releases on their fan pages and asking traditional media to publish paid stories about them in online news. Neither Vietnamese nor western organizations are adopting social media to engage in dialogue with stakeholders since the channels were found to be largely unsuitable for this purpose. Other types of communication such as personal phone calls and meetings are deemed more suitable for engaging in dialogue.

Regarding the decision stage, this study found that social media is adopted only after it is recommended by a practitioner team to a senior manager. The senior manager then makes the final decision regarding whether to use social media to communicate a particular crisis. The decision thus takes a bottom up approach but is finally an authority decision.

9.4. Implications for Hofstede's Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance

As found in this study, power distance and uncertainty avoidance in Vietnamese organizations both play a role in the adoption of social media for crisis communication. Issues involving high power distance were found throughout this research: the high power-distance affects the decision to use social media for crisis communication within an organization or an in-house public relations department as well as between an agency and an in-house public relations team. The participants agreed that within an organization, a senior manager decides whether to use social media, and the rest of the team only executes that decision (interview (1a)). In some organizations, a person with even a higher position than the public relations head, such as a CEO or a general director, is the decision maker, while the initial idea of adoption may be raised collectively by the public relations team (survey (1b)). No participants expressed that such a decision should be questioned. They will all follow such decision closely.

The author also sees high power distance acting between agency and in-house practitioners even though agency practitioners are not considered to have any difference in power compared to their in-house counterparts. However, when it comes to the decision to adopt social media in crisis communication, all agency participants agreed that they only make recommendations and leave all decisions to their clients (the in-house team) without any question or disagreement (interview (1a)). They show much conformity to such decisions and less independence in crisis communication practice. Thus, high power-distance also affects the agency-client relationship.

As discussed earlier, uncertainty avoidance can differ at international, organizational, and departmental levels. As a country with a low UA index, it was expected that Vietnamese organizations do not see innovations, or in this case, social media use in crisis communication, as

threatening and would be tolerant of trying it. However, many organizations and practitioners are against the use of social media for crisis communication because many Vietnamese organizations want no uncertainty in their crisis communication. As discussed, most pay media to run favorable stories about them. Thus, the uncertainty avoidance level of the country does not match the uncertainty avoidance level of organizations regarding their crises. The results show that some Vietnamese agency practitioners are fully against the use of social media in crisis communication (interview (1a)), some practitioners would only use social media if a crisis started on social media (survey (1b)), and some would try to take a crisis response away from social media (interview (1c)). A crisis is a sensitive issue and Vietnamese organizations are generally not willing to use social media during a crisis. Therefore, although Vietnam has a low UA index, organizations have high uncertainty avoidance regarding crisis management.

9.5. Implications for Networked Crisis Communication Theory (NCCT)

This study also analyzed stakeholders' perception based on Schultz et al.'s (2011) NCCT propositions. To review, NCCT challenges the older sole focus on the message during crisis communication. NCCT compared the effects of communication medium (platform) to those of the communication message based on three dependent aspects: reputation, secondary crisis communication and secondary crisis reactions. Its result posited that the medium influences the effects of crisis communication in all three aspects depending upon stakeholders' assessment of the medium. A use of social media in crisis communication for certain stakeholders can therefore help protect an organization's reputation and make stakeholders less willing to share a crisis message and less likely to engage in secondary crisis reactions compared to those who read information on social media channels (Schultz et al., 2011; Utz et al., 2013). Social media's influence on crisis communication may stem from its real-time interaction, implying that an organization commits more to its stakeholders, wants to inform them more quickly and directly, and tries to be sincere and caring (Schultz et al., 2011; Schultz et al., 2012). As discussed earlier, in Vietnam at this time, it is only older stakeholders who are positively affected by crisis communication on social media. This finding thus lends support to NCCT.

This study showed that Vietnamese stakeholders give importance to both the crisis communication message and the channels upon which a message is delivered. Although traditional media channels were perceived as the most credible for delivering a crisis response, older people appreciated a response on social media, as discussed above.

9.6. Summary

In summary, this discussion considered the focus of public relations in Vietnam, how social media channels are being adopted for crisis communication, older stakeholders' appreciation of

social media for crisis communication, implications for Diffusion of Innovations (DOI), implications for Hofstede's power distance and uncertainty avoidance, and implications for Networked Crisis Communication Theory (NCCT). The dissertation now moves to present the study's conclusion.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aimed to explore the following two research questions from a functionalist approach within a Vietnamese context:

- RQ1. How do organizations and public relations practitioners in Vietnam perceive the use of social media channels to communicate with stakeholders during crises?
- RQ2: What do Vietnamese stakeholders expect of an organizational crisis response that appears on social media channels?

The study consisted of three phases. Phase 1 consisted of semi-structured interviews with public relations practitioners (interview 1a) and crisis stakeholders (interview 1b). After thematically analyzing the interview results, hypotheses were developed for testing in phase 2. In this second phase, large-scale surveys of public relations practitioners (2a) and stakeholders (2b) were conducted. Results from phases 1 and 2 were then compared, and the study moved into its third and final phase. In phase 3, another set of interviews (1c) with public relations practitioners aimed to answer questions regarding differences in phase 1 and 2 results and to delve more deeply into some issues. Adoption of social media for crisis communication by practitioners and organizations was studied using Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) and Hofstede's dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance. Stakeholder preferences for organizational use of social media for crisis communication were studied using Shultz, et al.'s (2011) networked crisis communication theory (NCCT). The phase 1 interviews and phase 2 surveys both used a well-known crisis involving Vietnam's THP soft drink company to consider whether use of social media would have helped the company better manage their crisis.

In concluding, it is helpful to review four terms that were used throughout the study, which were *organization*, *stakeholder*, *crisis*, and *social media*. Firstly, the term *organization* referred to any business in Vietnam that people perceived as responsible for starting a crisis. Secondly, the term *stakeholder* referred to anyone who was external to the organization who could be a customer, victim or associate, or a member of the general public who followed news about a crisis. Third, the term *crisis* referred to stakeholders' perception of an organizational incident that is negative, out-of-the-ordinary and occurring abruptly; impacts stakeholders' interest in an organization; and requires immediate attention and response. The crises considered in this research were those that started or were amplified through social media and were internally caused, meaning that responsibility for the crises seemingly belonged to an organization. Finally, *social media* referred to the three popular channels in Vietnam, which are Facebook, forums and blogs.

10.1. Key Findings

Findings from the phase 2 surveys regarding current public relations practice and social media use in crisis communication in Vietnam are summarized in tables 11 and 12 below. These surveys were developed following the literature review and phase 1 interviews with practitioners and stakeholders from which hypotheses were developed for testing.

Table 11

Key Findings from Research Question 1 and Hypotheses

RQ1. How do organizations and public relations practitioners in Vietnam perceive the use of social media channels to communicate with stakeholders during crises?	
<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
H1a. Organizations in Vietnam use traditional media channels more often than social media to communicate with stakeholders during crises.	Rejected. Organizations have very similar choices of traditional and social media for crisis communication.
H1a1. In-house public relations practitioners are greater users of traditional media channels for crisis communication than agency practitioners.	Rejected.
H1a2. Agency public relations practitioners are greater users of social media channels for crisis communication than in-house practitioners.	Rejected.
H1b. Among the social media channels used by companies and public relations practitioners in Vietnam, Facebook is used more often than others in crisis response.	Confirmed. Organizations favor using two or more channels simultaneously but use Facebook most often.
H1c. Organizations in Vietnam perceive that social media, when compared to traditional media has fewer relative advantages in crisis communication.	Partially confirmed. Organizations in Vietnam think that communication using social media is less controllable than using traditional media. Organizations think that social media is as appropriate, professional, effective and trustworthy as traditional media.
H1c1. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication on traditional media is easier to control.	Rejected.
H1c2. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners	Rejected.

that crisis communication on traditional media is more appropriate.	Rejected.
H1c3. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication on traditional media is more professional or official.	Rejected.
H1c4. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication on traditional media is more appealing to target audiences.	Rejected.
H1c5. In-house public relations practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that people have more trust in crisis communication on traditional media.	However, the difference between in-house and agency practitioners is statistically significant. Agency practitioners have greater belief that stakeholders trust information on traditional media more than on social media.
H1d. Organizations in Vietnam think the majority of Vietnamese people seek and share crisis news on social media platforms.	Confirmed.
H1e. In Vietnamese organizations, a senior manager from the client, agency, or in-house is the one who decides whether to use social media in crisis response.	Confirmed.
H1f. Organizations in Vietnam perceive that social media is less useful than traditional media in crisis response.	Rejected. Organizations in Vietnam think social media is as useful and performs as well as traditional media in crisis response in terms of ease of communication, speed and cost-effectiveness.
H1f1. In-house practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication is easier on social media than it is on traditional media.	Rejected.
H1f2. In-house practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication is faster on social media than traditional media.	Rejected.
H1f3. In-house practitioners have stronger belief than agency practitioners that crisis communication is more cost-effective on social media than traditional media.	Rejected.

H1g. Organizations in Vietnam think that adoption of social media in crisis response requires more effort than using traditional media in crisis response.	Rejected.
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Table 12

Key Findings from Research Question 2 and Hypotheses

RQ2. What do Vietnamese stakeholders expect of an organizational crisis response that appears on social media channels?	
<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
H2a. When a crisis begins, most Vietnamese stakeholders expect organizations to communicate responsively on social media rather than requiring them to wait for information on traditional media.	Rejected. While a timely response is expected during crises, Vietnamese stakeholders prefer organizations to make an official and carefully-crafted crisis response.
H2a1. Compared to younger stakeholders, older stakeholders have greater preference for receiving official and carefully crafted crisis information on traditional media.	Rejected.
H2a2. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders have greater preference for receiving quick and direct crisis information on social media.	Rejected.
H2b. Most Vietnamese stakeholders have low trust and appreciation for crisis information shared on social media channels compared to such information shared on traditional channels.	Partially confirmed. Vietnamese stakeholders do not trust crisis information shared on social media channels, but they appreciate social media for its fast speed and convenience in sharing crisis information.
H2b1. Stakeholders believe that traditional media is more credible than social media for sharing crisis information.	Confirmed.
H2b2. Compared to younger stakeholders, older stakeholders will rate the credibility of traditional media more highly than social media for sharing crisis information.	Rejected.
H2b3. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will rate the credibility of social media more highly than traditional media for sharing crisis information.	Rejected. Older stakeholders rate the credibility of social media more highly than do younger stakeholders.
	Confirmed.

H2b4. Stakeholders think social media is quicker than traditional media for crisis communication.	Rejected.
H2b5. Compared to younger stakeholders, older stakeholders will rate the quickness of traditional media more highly for sharing crisis information.	Rejected. Older stakeholders have a stronger perception than
H2b6. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will rate the quickness of social media more highly for sharing crisis information.	younger stakeholders that social media channels are quick. Confirmed.
H2b7. Stakeholders think social media is more convenient than traditional media for sharing crisis information.	Rejected.
H2b8. Compared to younger stakeholders, older stakeholders will more strongly agree that traditional media are convenient for sharing crisis information.	Confirmed.
H2b9. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly agree that social media are convenient for sharing crisis information.	
H2c. When a crisis starts on a social media channel, most Vietnamese stakeholders expect organizations to respond on that channel.	Confirmed.
H2c1. Stakeholders prefer a crisis response to be on traditional media compared to social media.	Confirmed.
H2c2. Older stakeholders prefer crisis communication to be on traditional media.	Rejected.
H2c3. Younger stakeholders prefer crisis communication to be on social media.	Rejected. Older stakeholders have a preference for social media.
H2c4. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly agree that organizations should respond on the same social media channel on which a crisis started.	Rejected.
H2d. In Vietnam, when an organization responds to a crisis on social media, most stakeholders will perceive the organization to be sincere, caring, and willing to engage in dialogue.	Partially confirmed.

H2d1. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly perceive that organizations using social media for crisis response are more sincere.	Rejected.
H2d2. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly perceive that organizations using social media for crisis response are more caring.	Rejected. Older stakeholders perceive organizations using social media for crisis response to be more caring.
H2d3. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will more strongly perceive that organizations using social media for crisis response are more willing to engage in dialogue.	Rejected. Older stakeholders perceive organizations using social media for crisis response to be more willing to engage in dialogue.
H2e. In Vietnam, most stakeholders believe that if an organization responds to crises on social media, they would not talk badly about or boycott the organization, and they would support the organization after the crisis.	Rejected. Vietnamese stakeholders generally do have any supportive reactions to the organizations using social media for crisis communication and using social media does not lead to fewer secondary crisis reactions than crisis response using traditional media or no crisis response.
H2e1. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will be more likely to stop sharing bad news or talking badly about an organization if it uses social media for crisis response.	Rejected. Older stakeholders are more likely to stop sharing bad news or talking badly about an organization if it uses social media for crisis response.
H2e2. Compared to older stakeholders, younger stakeholders will be more likely to support an organization if it uses social media for crisis response.	Rejected. Older stakeholders are more likely to support an organization if it uses social media for crisis response.

10.2. Contributions to Scholarship

This study contributes to the scholarship of public relations by demonstrating how a Communist country in Asia is adopting the new technology of social media for the purpose of crisis communication. The study also contributes by revealing aspects of how public relations is being practiced in Vietnam. The public relations profession is still developing in this country, which as stated, is more concerned with marketing than stakeholder relations and crisis management. Vietnamese organizations are largely still following a one-way, press agency model for public relations and crisis communication.

The study also contributes to scholarship by testing Rogers' DOI, Hofstede's dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance, and Schultz, et al.'s NCCT in a new setting. The study supported aspects of all these theories. In its findings regarding older stakeholders, the study was particularly useful for supporting NCCT's claim that the channel used to send a crisis message can affect stakeholder behaviors.

10.3. Implications for Public Relations Practitioners

Since Vietnamese people spend large portions of their time on social media, organizations think that their stakeholders seek and share crisis information on social media, too. Some organizations have begun to adopt social media to communicate during smaller crises or crises that had started on social media or use social media in combination with traditional media for the sake of efficiency. Organizations try to take part in the communication channel that their stakeholders use. Despite the perceived uncontrollability and unprofessionalism of content on social media and many organizations' lack of confidence in using social media for crisis communication, however, many researchers and practitioners believe that social media is expected to take reasonable effort to adopt and to perform as well as traditional media in crisis response. Social media channels are also perceived to be fast and cost-effective for crisis communication.

As found in the surveys and interviews, many Vietnamese organizations are hesitant to adopt social media in crisis communication and prefer to use traditional media because of its controllability and professionalism. They are cautious that the herd mentality of online communities, or the tendency to share news deliberately without verifying it, may worsen a crisis. In addition, organizations think that their team is not competent or fully capable of handling social media in sensitive times like crises. Social media is also criticized for its limited target audience reach and the rapid spread of negative information during crises. Therefore, several organizations plan to stick with traditional media and offline methods for crisis response. They could, however, reap benefits by using it for listening to stakeholders during the stages of pre- and post- crisis, and by extending the reach of their crisis response by posting press releases on their fan pages.

Stakeholder participants in this study provided useful feedback for organizations regarding what they expect of a crisis response. In general, they were dissatisfied with the current crisis communication practice in Vietnam, mentioning that most organizations are unwilling to solve a crisis properly. Stakeholders do not appreciate delays in response and false "neutral" opinions; and they expect more timely and responsive reactions. Moreover, the stakeholders consider the content of a crisis response to be as important as the speed of the response; they desire sincerity and responsibility. Public relations practitioners usually underappreciate this expectation. However, as found in phase 2 results and as discussed earlier, some participants believe public relations in

Vietnam is changing for the better, and Vietnamese organizations are paying more attention to train and implement effective crisis communication.

Another useful finding for practitioners was that while they believe that their stakeholders most frequently seek and share news on social media rather than traditional media, stakeholders in general do not perceive social media channels to be credible for crisis information. Stakeholders prefer organizations to use traditional media for crisis information. However, practitioners said that they would continue to post crisis information (e.g. press releases) on social media even though these channels are perceived as less credible because stakeholders use these channels to begin learning about crises. Stakeholders interested in a crisis will seek out information on a range of other channels to learn more about a crisis.

A final implication of this study for public relations practitioners is that they should share their knowledge of crisis communication on social media with one another. In this study, all practitioner participants' assessments came from their own experience on a crisis-by-crisis basis, not from sharing information with others or from their educational background. As the Vietnamese public relations industry lacks regulations and standards, practitioners do not have a common definition of their profession or a common set of practices, do not follow any set public relations guidelines or approaches, and do not have a forum to discuss best practices. As a crisis is a sensitive situation and should not call for a tried-and-true strategy, formal public relations training for crisis communication is needed. Vietnamese practitioners should share their knowledge of crisis communication and exchange information on previous practice so others can productively and effectively use social media for crisis communication in the future.

10.4 Limitations

This study has an inherent limitation due to its sampling and methodology approaches. The sampling techniques suggest the shortcoming of representativeness and generalizability in both main participant groups. Further, the results do not indicate causation; they simply state the correlations of the variables from the respondents' perspectives. Future research should consider probability sampling techniques to overcome the limitations of this study and create broader generalizations of the results.

10.5 Recommendations for Future Research

A similar study to this one could be conducted in future to continue evaluating how public relations practitioners, organizations, and stakeholders are using social media channels to communicate about crises. Such a study would give further evidence regarding the paths by which social media channels are being adopted for crisis communication in a Communist country, the different ways in which practitioners and organizations use these channels, how media transparency

and power distance interrelate, how future changes in tools may affect adoption, and how social media is affecting the country.

In summary, the findings of this study can provide more insight into both organizations' and stakeholders' perspectives on the use of social media in crisis communication, helping close the gaps between the two perceptions. These findings are expected to be of interest to communication scholars and public relations or communication professionals in Vietnam. As social media has become an increasing concern in the country, these scholars and professionals seek new and different ways to improve crisis communication practice on these channels, particularly by reviewing the influences of social media adoption within an organization and the underlying beliefs of stakeholders from this study. Further, although the study is focused on the Vietnamese market, the results may be applicable more broadly and useful in analyzing the same topics in other markets.

Crises will not disappear from organizational settings and social media may become even more integrated into people's daily lives. Therefore, exploring the connections between crisis communication and social media is and will continue to be an important focus of the public relations field, not only in academia or in Vietnam, but also in business practice generally and in a global context.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Interview (1a) Questions

1. What is your opinion of the current use of social media in crisis communication in Vietnam?
2. If you relate to the Tan Hiep Phat crisis, do you think using social media to respond to the stakeholders would have changed the situation?
3. Has your organization considered using social media in crisis communication before?
 - How was the idea of social media adoption brought up in your organization?
 - Who brought up the idea of social media adoption?
 - Which advantages and disadvantages of social media were evaluated during the consideration?
 - Was social media finally adopted in your organization's crisis communication plan?
 - Who was the one to make the final decision on whether social media should be adopted?
 - In your opinion, what do you think to be the main influence in adopting or rejecting social media use in crisis response in your organization? Why?
4. Have you actually used social media in crisis response for your organization?
 - If yes, what were your expected outcomes? How did the stakeholders respond to such effort?
 - If no, why not?
5. Do you think your stakeholders would prefer seeing the crisis response on social media instead of traditional media? Especially if the crisis started on social media, why would they prefer it?
6. Would you like to increase or decrease the use of social media in crisis communication for your organization? Why?
7. Do you think using social media in crisis response would improve your current practice?

Interview (2a) Questions

1. What is your opinion of the current use of social media in crisis communication in Vietnam?
2. If you relate to the Tan Hiep Phat crisis, do you think that using social media to respond to the stakeholders would have changed the situation?
3. What do you usually do when there is a crisis that you're involved with or care about?
 - Where do you usually turn for information and support? And through which channel(s)?
4. What would you think about the responsible organization if it did not respond at all? If it responded on traditional media? Responded on social media?
5. If a crisis starts on social media, do you expect the responsible organization to respond on the same social media channel? Why?

6. If an organization responded quickly on social media with a personalized message to stakeholders, how would you assess that organization?
7. What do you expect of a good crisis response? Does social media use alone make a good crisis response?

Interview (1c) Questions

1. What do you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of social media use, compared to traditional media use, in crisis response?
2. Have you used social media as a main platform to respond during crises?
 - If yes, is it your preferred crisis communication platform and why?
 - If no, is it listed as one of the platforms to use in your crisis communication plan? If you haven't used social media for crisis communication, why not?
 - Why have you (or haven't you) included social media in your crisis communication plan?
3. One of the findings of previous research was that Vietnamese stakeholders use traditional media more than social media to seek and share crisis information. Does this finding make you plan to use traditional media and social media in crisis communication any differently?
4. One of the findings in previous research was that Vietnamese stakeholders do not trust crisis information shared on social media channels. What do you think about this statement? Does it make you plan your crisis communication any differently?
5. Does the age group of your stakeholders affect your choice of crisis communication channel?
 - One of the findings of previous research was that if an older stakeholder knows about social media, he or she typically thinks more highly of these channels and organizations that use them than do younger stakeholders. Does this make you plan to use traditional media and social media in crisis communication any differently?
6. One of the findings of previous research was that Vietnamese organizations underappreciate the value of sincerity and accommodative content (including corrective action, and mortification or apology). What do you think about this finding? Can you give an example of when this statement holds true (or does not hold true) and lessons learned?
7. One of the findings in the previous literature was that when comparing the influences of the communication medium and message on organizational reputation during crises, the choice of medium can influence crisis communication results. What do you think about this finding? Can you give an example in which this statement holds true (or does not hold true) and lessons learned?

8. While the primary focus of PR worldwide is reputation and reputation management, the focus of PR in Vietnam is more aligned with promotional and marketing goals. Why do you think this is the case? How does it affect your practice in crisis communication?

Appendix 2: Survey (1b) Questionnaire

About you:

- By proceeding with this survey, you confirm that you meet the following requirements (please check all statements that apply):
 - _____ You have practiced public relations (PR) in an agency or a PR/communication department within an organization.
 - _____ You have at least two years of experience in PR practice.
 - _____ You understand and have knowledge about social media, crisis communication and crisis response.
 - _____ You understand the business environment and the culture of Vietnam.
- How long have you practiced PR? (please choose one)
 - _____ More than 9 years.
 - _____ 6-8 years.
 - _____ 2-5 years.
- Are you practicing PR in...? (please choose one)
 - _____ an agency.
 - _____ a PR/communication department within an organization (in-house).

Survey questions:

From this point on, the following terms will be used:

- *Your organization* refers to the organization that you work for (if you are an in-house practitioner) or your clients (if you are an agency practitioner).
- *Traditional media* refers to the channels of print or online publications, TV, radio, etc.
- *Social media* refers to the channels of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, social network sites, forums, etc.

For questions 1-6, please range the provided statements regarding PR practice in Vietnam within the three-point scale:

[Always = 1 – Occasionally = 2 – Never = 3]

		Always (1)	Occasionally (2)	Never (3)
1.	Your organization responds indirectly to stakeholders about crises with media conferences and media releases.			
2.	Your organization responds directly to stakeholders about crises on social media channels. Responding directly means that your organization skips the step of journalistic gatekeeping to deliver personalized messages.			
3.	For a single crisis, your organization uses two or more social media channels to respond to stakeholders.			
4.	Your organization responds to stakeholders about crises through Facebook.			
5.	Your organization responds to stakeholders about crises through blogs.			
6.	Your organization responds to stakeholders about crises through social forums.			

For questions 7-27, please evaluate your level of agreement with the provided statements regarding PR practice in Vietnam using the five-point scale:

[Strongly disagree = 1 – Disagree = 2 – Neither agree or disagree = 3 – Agree = 4 – Strongly agree = 5]

		Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
7.	During crises, your organization believes that communication on traditional media is easier to control than on social media.					
8.	During crises, your organization believes that communication on traditional media is more appropriate than on social media.					
9.	During crisis, your organization believes that communication on traditional media is more professional or official than on social media.					
10.	During crisis, your organization believes that communication on traditional media is more effective at appealing to the target audiences than social media. “Appealing” means that traditional media can well reach to the target audiences and meet their communication needs.					
11.	During crisis, your organization believes that people trust information on traditional media more than that on social media.					

		Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
12.	During crisis, your organization believes that people mainly seek news on traditional media.					
13.	During crisis, your organization believes that people mainly share news from traditional media.					
14.	During crisis, your organization believes that people mainly seek news on social media.					
15.	During crisis, your organization believes that people mainly share news from social media.					
16.	During crisis, your organization believes that social media makes crisis communication easier than traditional media.					
17.	During crisis, your organization believes that social media makes crisis communication faster than traditional media.					
18.	During crisis, your organization believes that social media makes crisis communication more cost-effective than traditional media.					
19.	Your organization believes that responding to a crisis on social media requires much more time and effort than responding via traditional media.					

		Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
20.	Your organization believes that responding to a crisis with traditional media takes much more time and effort than responding via social media.					
21.	Your organization knows social media well enough or has enough technical support to integrate social media into its current crisis response process.					
22.	Using social media in crisis news sharing and crisis response is easy for you or your organization.					
23.	Your organization is willing to use social media for crisis response.					
24.	Your organization has preferred channels to communicate a crisis with stakeholders. That is, your organizational regularly uses the same channels to communicate about a crisis.					
25.	Your organization chooses channels to communicate about a crisis with stakeholders based on the characteristics of each crisis.					

		Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
26.	You alone (as a PR practitioner or PR agency) raise the idea whether to use social media for crisis response.					
27.	Your PR department or PR agency, as a team, raises the idea whether to use social media for crisis response.					

28. Who is the one to make the final decision on whether to use social media for crisis response in your organization?

29. What do you believe are the main influences in adopting or rejecting social media use in crisis response in your organization? Why?

30. What crisis characteristics would lead your organization or yourself to use social media for communication?

31. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about social media use in crisis communication in Vietnam?

32. Please tell us about yourself.

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Appendix 3: Survey (2b) Questionnaire

By proceeding with this survey, you confirm that you meet the following requirements (please check all statements that apply):

- _____ You are at least 18 years old.
- _____ You understand what social media is and how it works.
- _____ You are knowledgeable of social issues and business news.
- _____ You understand the business environment and the culture of Vietnam.

For questions 1-16, please refer to your knowledge about previous organization crises in Vietnam (i.e., Tan Hiep Phat, Bphone, Vedan, Danlait) and the negative news about any other Vietnamese organizations you may know.

Please select your level of agreement with the provided statements regarding PR practice in Vietnam within the five-point scale:

[Strongly disagree = 1 – Disagree = 2 – Neither agree or disagree = 3 – Agree = 4 – Strongly agree = 5]

In this survey, following terms will be used:

- *Organization* refers to a business/company involved in a crisis or a potential crisis.
- *Traditional media* refers to the channels of print/online publications, TV, radio, etc.
- *Social media* refers to the channels of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, social network sites, forums, etc.

		Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
1.	During crises, you expect organizations to make the initial crisis response official and carefully-crafted, even if it takes more time.					

		Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
2.	During crises, you expect organizations to make the initial crisis response quick and direct, even if the information may not be official or verified.					
3.	You believe traditional media is a credible channel for organizations to share crisis information.					
4.	You believe traditional media is a quick channel for organizations to share crisis information.					
5.	You believe traditional media is a convenient channel for organizations to share crisis information.					
6.	You believe social media is a credible channel for organizations to share crisis information.					
7.	You believe social media is a quick channel for organizations to share crisis information.					
8.	You believe social media is a convenient channel for organizations to share crisis information.					

		Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
9.	During crises, you expect organizations to share information on traditional media.					
10.	During crises, you expect organizations to share information on social media.					
11.	If a crisis starts on social media, you expect the involved organization to respond on the same social media channel.					
12.	If an organization responds quickly and directly through social media, you would be more likely to believe that the organization is sincere. Communicating directly means that the organization skips the step of journalistic gatekeeping to deliver personalized messages.					
13.	If an organization responds quickly and directly through social media, you would be more likely to believe that the organization cares about its stakeholders.					

		Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
14.	If an organization responds quickly and directly through social media, you would be more likely to believe that the organization is willing to have a dialogue with its stakeholders.					
15.	If an organization responds quickly and directly through social media, you would be more likely to stop sharing bad news or talking badly about the organization.					
16.	If an organization responds quickly and directly through social media, you would be more likely to support the organization after the crisis.					

17. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your expectations of an organization's crisis communication in Vietnam?

18. Please tell us about yourself.

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Appendix 4: Participant Explanatory Statement Sample



November 29, 2015

The Use of Social Media in Crisis Response

[Ethics Reference Number: 0000015357]

THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CRISIS RESPONSE – SURVEY – GROUP (1)

My name is Tuong-Minh Ly-Le and I am currently completing an HDR research at Bond University under the supervision of Dr. Marilyn Mitchell and Dr. Sven Brodmerkel.

I am conducting a research investigation into the use of social media in crisis response. I am specifically interested in how Vietnamese companies and stakeholders view social media engagement during crises.

As part of this study, I will invite you to complete this survey.

This survey will take you 5-15 minutes to complete. One question will be displayed at a time. Submitting your completed survey is an indication of your consent to participate in the study. You can withdraw your responses at any time before you have submitted the survey. All the data collected in this study will be treated with complete confidentiality and not made accessible to any person besides me, except when I suspect that unlawful activity has been engaged, or as required by law. Should there be any changes in the terms to which you already agreed, the researcher will notify you at once, and you can renegotiate your consent to participate.

The information I obtain from you will be dealt with in a manner that ensures you remain anonymous. Data will be stored in a secured location at Bond University for a period of 5 years in accordance with the guidelines set out by the Bond University Human Research Ethics Committee.

It is anticipated that the data collected during this study will assist us in understanding the main channels used by involved companies during crises and the criteria typically followed when choosing those channels.

If you experience distress from participation in this research, please contact Tuong-Minh Ly-Le, +84 1299670791 or tuong-minh.ly-le@student.bond.edu.au.

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is being conducted please make contact with –

Bond University Human Research Ethics Committee,

Bond University Office of Research Services,

Bond University, Gold Coast, 4229, Australia

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We thank you for taking time to assist us with this research.

Yours sincerely,

Tuong-Minh Ly-Le

Appendix 5: Participant Consent Form Sample



THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

- ✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- ✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- ✓ The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- ✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the Bond University now or in the future.
- ✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- ✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.
- ✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except if the researcher suspects engagement in unlawful activity, or if the information is required by law.
- ✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, but these publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

.....
Signature

.....
PRINT name

.....
Date

Appendix 6: Translation and Back Translation Sample

English – Vietnamese Translation

Original:

Have you used social media for crisis communication purpose for your organization? If yes, what were your expected outcomes? How did the stakeholders evaluate your social media use during the crisis? If no, why not?

Translation to Vietnamese:

Bạn đã bao giờ thực sự sử dụng mạng xã hội trong truyền thông khủng hoảng cho tổ chức của bạn? Nếu có, kết quả bạn mong muốn là gì? Những bên liên quan đánh giá như thế nào việc sử dụng mạng xã hội trong khủng hoảng? Nếu không, tại sao?

Back translation to English:

Have you actually used social media for crisis communication for your organization? If yes, what were your expected results? How did the involved parties evaluate your use of social media during crises? If no, why not?

Vietnamese – English Translation

Original:

Mình thấy một cái hành động rất phổ biến của các công ty khi có khủng hoảng là mọi người sẽ đi kiếm những comment hay bài viết về khủng hoảng để xóa. Mình thấy cách này không hiệu quả vì bạn chưa giải quyết được lo lắng của mọi người mà chỉ đơn thuần che lấp đi khủng hoảng. Vì vậy mọi người càng băn khoăn lo lắng hơn về chuyện gì đang xảy ra.

Translation to English:

One common action companies take when they face a crisis is to delete the comments about the crisis or try to take down articles reporting the crisis. This is not a good way to handle the crisis because it doesn't ease people's concerns; instead, it just hides some crisis activities. People then become even more worried of what went wrong and what's going on.

Back translation to Vietnamese:

Một hành động rất phổ biến các công ty hay làm khi có khủng hoảng là xóa các comment và bài viết về khủng hoảng. Đây không phải là cách giải quyết về nó chưa giải quyết được lo lắng của mọi người mà chỉ giấu đi một phần khủng hoảng. Vì vậy mọi người càng lo lắng hơn về chuyện gì đang diễn ra.

Appendix 7: Detailed Results of Survey (1b)

Table 13

Experience Range of Survey (1b) Participants

Working experience in PR industry		
	Frequency	Percent
2-5 years	26	52.0
6-8 years	15	30.0
9+ years	9	18.0
Total	50	100.0

Table 14

Current Workplaces of Survey (1b) Participants

PR workplaces of participants		
	Frequency	Percent
Agency	18	36.0
In-house	32	64.0
Total	50	100.0

Table 15

Frequencies of Agency's and In-house's Uses of Traditional Media and Social Media Platforms for Crisis Communication

Agency uses media conferences and releases for crisis communication			In-house uses media conferences and releases for crisis communication	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Always	8	44.4	11	34.4
Occasionally	6	33.3	16	50.0
Never	4	22.2	5	15.6
Total	18	100.0	32	100.0
Agency uses social media channels for crisis communication			In-house uses social media channels for crisis communication	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Always	10	55.6	10	31.3
Occasionally	4	22.2	12	37.5
Never	4	22.2	10	31.3
Total	18	100.0	32	100.0

Table 16

Frequency of Organizations' Use of Two or More Types of Social Media for Crisis Communication

Two or more types of social media		
	Frequency	Percent
Always	35	67.6
Occasionally	15	29.4
Never	1	2.0
Total	51	100.0

Table 17

Frequency in which Each Social Media Channel was Used for Crisis Response

Facebook			Blogs		Social forums	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Percent	Percent
Always	33	64.7	11	21.6	22	43.1
Occasionally	9	17.6	16	31.4	18	35.3
Never	9	17.6	24	47.1	11	21.6
Total	51	100.0	51	100.0	51	100.0
Mean rank	2.37		1.54		2.09	

Table 18

Levels of Agreement between Agency and In-house Respondents Regarding the Relative Advantages of Traditional Media vs. Social Media in Crisis Communication

Agency thinks communication on traditional media is easier to control				In-house thinks communication on traditional media is easier to control	
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	5.6		2	6.3
Disagree	5	27.8		5	15.6
Neutral	4	22.2		4	12.5
Agree	4	22.2		15	46.9
Strongly agree	4	22.2		6	18.8
Total	18	100.0		32	100.0

Agency thinks communication on traditional media is more appropriate				In-house thinks communication on traditional media is more appropriate	
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	5.6		2	6.3
Disagree	5	27.8		8	25.0
Neutral	5	27.8		9	28.1
Agree	3	16.7		10	31.3
Strongly agree	4	22.2		3	9.4
Total	18	100.0		32	100.0

Agency thinks communication on traditional media is more professional or official			In-house thinks communication on traditional media is more professional or official	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	2	10.1	2	6.3
Disagree	3	16.7	9	28.1
Neutral	4	22.2	5	15.6
Agree	5	27.8	11	34.4
Strongly agree	4	22.2	5	15.6
Total	18	100.0	32	100.0

Agency thinks communication on traditional media is more effective at appealing to target audience			In-house thinks communication on traditional media is more effective at appealing to target audience	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	5.6	2	6.3
Disagree	6	33.3	12	37.5
Neutral	3	16.7	6	18.8
Agree	5	27.8	8	25.0
Strongly agree	3	16.7	4	12.5
Total	18	100.0	32	100.0

Agency thinks people trust information on traditional media more			In-house thinks people trust information on traditional media more	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	5.6	3	9.4
Disagree	2	10.1	10	31.3
Neutral	7	38.9	8	25.0
Agree	5	27.8	7	21.9
Strongly agree	3	16.7	4	12.5
Total	18	100.0	32	100.0

Table 19

Levels of Agreement with the Stakeholders' Tendencies to Seek News

Seek news in traditional media			Seek news in social media	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	8	15.7	1	2.0
Disagree	23	45.1	8	15.7
Neutral	12	23.5	10	19.6
Agree	5	9.8	26	51.0
Strongly agree	3	5.9	6	11.8
Total	51	100.0	51	100.0

Table 20

Levels of Agreement with the Stakeholders' Tendencies to Share News

	Share news in traditional media		Share news in social media	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	8	15.7	2	3.9
Disagree	23	45.1	5	9.8
Neutral	8	15.7	7	13.7
Agree	9	17.6	23	45.1
Strongly agree	3	5.9	14	27.5
Total	51	100.0	51	100.0

Table 21

Levels of Agreement with the Main Proposer for Social Media Adoption in Crisis Communication

	Raised by an individual		Raised as a team	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	6	11.8	6	11.8
Disagree	13	25.5	7	13.7
Neutral	14	27.5	10	19.6
Agree	13	25.5	19	37.3
Strongly agree	5	9.8	9	17.6
Total	51	100.0	51	100.0

Table 22

Levels of Agreement between Agency and In-house Respondents Regarding the Performance Expectancy of Social Media in Crisis Communication

	Agency thinks communication on social media is easier		In-house thinks communication on social media is easier	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	5.6	2	6.3
Disagree	5	27.8	2	6.3
Neutral	0	0.0	6	18.8
Agree	6	33.3	18	56.3
Strongly agree	6	33.3	4	12.5
Total	18	100.0	32	100.0

	Agency thinks communication on social media is faster		In-house thinks communication on social media is faster	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	5.6	2	6.3
Disagree	1	5.6	1	3.1

Neutral	2	10.1	2	6.3
Agree	10	55.6	14	43.8
Strongly agree	4	22.2	13	40.6
Total	18	100.0	32	100.0
Agency thinks communication on social media is more cost-effective		In-house thinks communication on social media is more cost-effective		
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	3	16.7	2	6.3
Disagree	1	5.6	5	15.6
Neutral	3	16.7	7	21.9
Agree	7	38.9	15	46.9
Strongly agree	4	22.2	3	9.4
Total	18	100.0	32	100.0

Table 23

Levels of Agreement between Agency and In-house Respondents Regarding the Overall Usefulness of Social Media in Crisis Communication

Agency thinks social media is useful			In-house thinks social media is useful	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	5.6	1	3.1
Disagree	0	0.0	5	15.6
Neutral	4	22.2	3	9.4
Agree	6	33.3	15	46.9
Strongly agree	7	38.9	8	25.0
Total	18	100.0	32	100.0
Agency thinks traditional media is useful			In-house thinks traditional media is useful	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	5.6	0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0	4	12.5
Neutral	2	10.1	4	12.5
Agree	11	61.1	19	59.4
Strongly agree	4	22.2	5	15.6
Total	18	100.0	32	100.0

Table 24

Levels of Agreement Regarding the Time and Effort Social Media and Traditional Media Take in Crisis Communication

Social media requires much more time and effort		Traditional media takes much more time and effort	
Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent

Strongly disagree	3	5.9	5	9.8
Disagree	16	31.4	11	21.6
Neutral	10	19.6	11	21.6
Agree	17	33.3	20	38.2
Strongly agree	5	9.8	4	7.8
Total	51	100.0	51	100.0

Table 25

Levels of Agreement Regarding the Effort Expectancy of Social Media in Crisis Communication

Your organization knows social media well enough to use it		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	3	5.9
Disagree	3	5.9
Neutral	9	17.6
Agree	27	52.9
Strongly agree	9	17.6
Total	51	100.0
Using social media in crisis news sharing and crisis response is easy for your organization		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	4	7.8
Disagree	6	11.8
Neutral	12	23.5
Agree	23	45.1
Strongly agree	6	11.8
Total	51	100.0

Table 26

Levels of Agreement Regarding the Willingness to Use Social Media for Crisis Response

Organization's willingness to use social media in crisis response		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	3	5.9
Disagree	5	9.8
Neutral	9	17.6
Agree	26	51.0
Strongly agree	8	15.7
Total	51	100.0

Table 27

Levels of Agreement between Agency and In-house Respondents Regarding the Organizations' Choice of Channels for Crisis Communication

Agency has preferred channels			In-house has preferred channels	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	2	10.1	1	3.1
Disagree	1	5.6	2	6.3
Neutral	0	0.0	6	18.8
Agree	11	61.1	20	62.5
Strongly agree	4	22.2	3	9.4
Total	18	100.0	32	100.0

Agency chooses channels based on characteristics of each crisis			In-house chooses channels based on characteristics of each crisis	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	2	10.1	1	3.1
Disagree	0	0.0	1	3.1
Neutral	0	0.0	2	6.3
Agree	8	44.4	20	62.5
Strongly agree	8	44.4	8	25.0
Total	18	100.0	32	100.0

Appendix 8: Detailed Results of Survey (2b)

Table 28

Age Group and Gender of Survey (2b) Participants

Age group		
	Frequency	Percent
18-24	168	45.4
25-34	127	34.3
35+	75	20.3
Total	370	100.0
Gender		
	Frequency	Percent
Female	238	64.3
Male	132	35.7
Total	370	100.0

Table 29

Levels of Agreement Regarding the Stakeholders' Preference for Crisis Information

Official, carefully-crafted information			Quick and direct information	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	17	4.6	49	13.2
Disagree	21	5.7	142	37.4
Neutral	27	7.3	48	13.0
Agree	201	54.3	108	28.2
Strongly agree	104	28.1	23	6.2
Total	370	100.0	370	100.0

Table 30

Levels of Agreement Regarding the Credibility of Traditional Media and Social Media in Sharing Crisis Information

Traditional media is a credible channel			Social media is a credible channel	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	25	6.8	32	7.6
Disagree	72	19.5	126	34.1
Neutral	71	18.2	94	25.4
Agree	148	40.0	96	25.9
Strongly agree	54	14.6	22	5.9
Total	370	100.0	370	100.0

Table 31

Levels of Agreement Regarding the Speed of Traditional Media and Social Media in Sharing Crisis Information

	Traditional media is a quick channel		Social media is a quick channel	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	30	8.1	23	6.2
Disagree	122	33.0	21	5.7
Neutral	73	19.7	37	10.0
Agree	124	33.5	167	45.1
Strongly agree	21	5.7	122	33.0
Total	370	100.0	370	100.0

Table 32

Levels of Agreement Regarding the Convenience of Traditional Media and Social Media in Sharing Crisis Information

	Traditional media is a convenient channel		Social media is a convenient channel	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	25	6.8	24	6.5
Disagree	73	19.7	25	6.8
Neutral	79	21.4	49	13.2
Agree	163	44.1	180	47.6
Strongly agree	30	8.1	92	24.9
Total	370	100.0	370	100.0

Table 33

Levels of Agreement Regarding the Expected Platform for an Organization to Share Crisis Information

	Share crisis information on traditional media		Share crisis information on social media	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	14	3.8	18	4.9
Disagree	31	7.4	44	11.9
Neutral	61	16.5	74	20.0
Agree	191	51.6	176	47.6
Strongly agree	73	19.7	58	15.7
Total	370	100.0	370	100.0

Table 34

Levels of Agreement that an Organization Should Respond on the Same Social Media Channel on which a Crisis Started

Respond on the same social media channel		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	18	4.9
Disagree	56	15.1
Neutral	72	19.5
Agree	145	38.2
Strongly agree	79	21.4
Total	370	100.0

Table 35

Levels of Agreement Regarding the Stakeholders' Perception of an Organization that Uses Social Media for Crisis Response

The organization is sincere		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	23	6.2
Disagree	87	23.5
Neutral	118	31.9
Agree	102	27.6
Strongly agree	40	10.8
Total	370	100.0
The organization is caring		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	19	5.1
Disagree	37	10.0
Neutral	68	17.4
Agree	167	45.1
Strongly agree	79	21.4
Total	370	100.0
The organization is willing to have a dialogue		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	23	6.2
Disagree	35	9.5
Neutral	60	16.2
Agree	168	45.4
Strongly agree	84	22.7
Total	370	100.0

Table 36

Levels of Agreement Regarding the Stakeholders' Reaction to an Organization that Uses Social Media for Crisis Response

Likely to stop sharing bad news or talking badly		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	24	6.5
Disagree	64	17.3
Neutral	152	41.1
Agree	108	28.2
Strongly agree	22	5.9
Total	370	100.0
Likely to support the organization after the crisis		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	14	3.8
Disagree	60	16.2
Neutral	164	44.3
Agree	109	29.5
Strongly agree	23	6.2
Total	370	100.0